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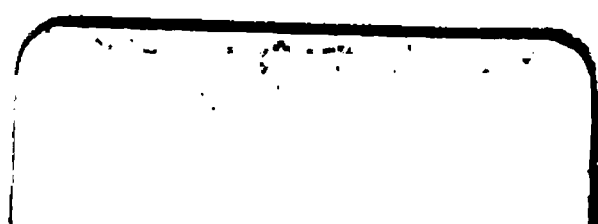
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SHORT STORIES

A MAGAZINE OF SELECT FICTION

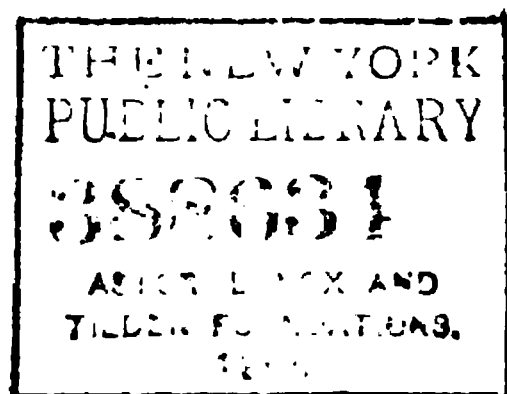
VOLUME XII.

JANUARY-APRIL, 1893

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1893

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(See p. 17.)



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ANNOUNCEMENT

Attention is called to the additional prizes offered elsewhere in this number. Intending competitors should consult the rules, to which the editors are obliged to adhere rigidly, owing to the great quantity of manuscript submitted.

THE SIGHING BELLS OF BOUILLON

BY BERTA TAUBER HARPER

The author of this sketch was in Sedan at the time of its beleaguering, and relates an interesting incident concerning the unhappy Emperor of the French. Written for Short Stories—Copyrighted. Illustrated by F. T. Richards.

Still was the Ardennes forest since the last cry of a world-astounding battle had echoed through its depths; and the hills around the vale of the *Meuse* that, smoke-enwrapped, had repeated to each other the formidable messages of cannon, mitrailleuse, and needle-gun, reached up in silent gloom into a heavy atmosphere.

There was naught to disturb the stillness of the craggy wilderness, save the hoarse caw of the carrion crow, and the

cautious tread upon the
rustling leaves of the
wolf on his nightly
prowls; for large
had been the har-
vest of death,
and the hastily



interred bodies lay not far beneath the limy soil.

Silent also was the group of horsemen who emerged from the thicket on the mountain path along the Belgian frontier. Their uniforms, some of bright red and gray, others of a sombre blue, formed a vivid contrast to the dull, shadowless

hues of the far-spent day. Golden epaulettes, though not reflecting flashes of the hidden sun, gleamed among the dark pines, along which the steeds bore their grave-faced riders.

Anxious and sympathetic glances were cast toward the central figure of the group, who was leaning forward in the saddle with drooping head. Indeed, the swordless officer in red culottes and gray redingote seemed to be in physical pain, for he often clutched convulsively the pommel of his saddle with both his hands. His face was olive-hued and haggard, the long, black mustache hung droopingly from sunken cheeks, and the lustreless eye seemed absorbed in the pallid ferns by the road-side, and in the rank, brown woods, seed-burdened, and bending low. When addressed, he responded only by a weary, absent shaking of the head, and looked vaguely into the distance which continued in lightless gray between mountain and forest.

Thus they had ridden for hours, up and down steep paths, in silence.

Suddenly the road turned. Reddish-gray boulders confronted the horsemen, and on a long mountain-ridge rose grave and grim a mighty fortress, nearly overshadowing a little town which, like a timid dove, nestled at the giant's feet, in the valley. Smoke lazily curled from quaint old houses, and lost itself in the falling mist.

"We are on neutral ground," said, with respectful gesture, one of the officers to a tall, aged comrade in blue.

A sound, not unlike a sigh of relief, proceeded from the downcast figure.

On a rocky platform of the wood-crowned heights the party halted, apparently impressed with the grand scenery before them. Summit joined summit, mist-veiled and lofty, encircling that little Eden of the Belgian land, Bouillon, which lay before them in the solemn quiet of the autumn evening.

Obeying a gesture of the stately old officer the riders dismounted and made hasty preparations for the comfort of their gloomy companion, whom they helped out of the saddle—a courtesy which he accepted with a grateful look, declining, however, any further attentions.

With the air of a man who wishes to conceal physical weakness, he steadied his staggering step, marched up and down a few paces, and then leaned wearily and exhausted against the wind-sheltered wall of a moss-covered rock in almost rev-



erent attitude; with head resting on folded hands he looked about him as one awaking from a fearful dream.

Westward his unsteady gaze would wander, where now only an indistinct line of brown and gray divided earth and sky; a sky that had for nights been illumined by the blaze of burning cities, and for days been hidden by columns of smoke; thus, in turn, passively reflecting and absorbing earth's woes, deaf to the cries of outraged humanity.

He turned away as from a hideous vision, and looked over to the rock-hewn citadel with its history of hoary ages and of Godfrey de Bouillon, then down at the peaceful town and the little Sémoi river, in whose limpid waters the overhanging branches repeated themselves and lined its bed with gold.

The evening air was stirring. The rising wind moaned through the forsaken spaces of the old fortress. It brought up wild, weird wailings from the subterranean passages and vaults, from that abode of eternal night and misery, the "oubli," where once anguished mortals had been thrown to slowly perish on the moldering bone-heaps of former victims.

The massive drawbridge creaked and groaned in its rusty hinges loosened by the storms of ages, and its chains swayed against the rock in regular rhythm, sending each time a shiver down the mountain.

And hark! through the misty gloaming vibrated a sigh, a long, loud, woful sigh, then another, and another, with all the anguish of the human breast, and yet not human. It was repeated from mountain to mountain in sympathizing echo.

The man by the rock was aroused from his reverie, and attentively listened.

Again the three mournful sighs sent their woful tremor through the woodland gloom:

"Ah! Me! Ah!"

Long the sad-faced listener gazed into space, motionless; only a painful twitching of the mouth, and the deepening shadows under his dark orbs giving life to his statue-like appearance. Had those sighs touched a responsive chord?

Then he beckoned one of the attendants standing at respectful distance, and who, having understood the mute question, said, with low voice:

"It is the tolling of the Bouillon bells for a dying person, Ma—jesty."

"For a dying one!—Oh, Death, why didst thou not——"

And the speaker buried his face in his hands; his deep sob blended with the last dying sigh of the bells; he lost his foothold, and but for helping hands would have sunk to the earth.

The ex-Emperor of France—for the first time since the humiliation at Sedan—broke down.

A friendly hand was laid upon his shoulder, that of the venerable King of Prussia, who spoke:

“Brother-Majesty, only a few steps further, and we will be at the end of to-day’s journey. We shall rest at ——”

But the deep moan of the ex-Emperor interrupted him.

Rest! Rest for the head that wore the crown of France; for the dethroned monarch who was on his way to captivity in the land of his conqueror!

Mechanically Napoleon mounted his Arabian courser, silently the riders wended their way downward, while the wind howled louder, drowning the hoof-strokes of their horses.

Branches swayed and groaned; the dark tree-crowns tossed hither and thither, as if searching for the lost starlight. A thousand voices awoke in the nocturnal wood; but they were not the voices of spring that call hidden germs to new life. Their breath scattered hither and thither the wind-loosened leaves, and they whispered to the fallen emperor of the evanescence of mundane glory.

The drizzling mist had changed into pouring rain. Darkness enshrouded the Ardennes forest and the horsemen, who were pressing onward.

IN THE DAYS OF ALBRECHT DÜRER

BY EMILY H. HOPPIN

The prize in Competition 8 has been awarded to the author of this interesting story of love and the dawn of art in Nuremberg. Written for Short Stories—Copyrighted.

Master Adolph Haller, Goldsmith and Chancellor of the Guild in Nuremberg, was in such haste to reach his comfortable house on the Winkler Strasse, that he actually passed his colleague and friend, Hermann Eckardt, without greeting.

Eckardt gazed after his retreating figure in some surprise, and then remarked to himself dryly, as he buried his hands in the sleeves of his fur-lined cloak: "Something must have happened. Adolph has made a great sale, or perhaps he has received an offer for the hand of his pretty daughter."

Master Eckardt would have been still more surprised could he have seen his friend hasten up the carved oaken staircase of his abode in a manner that was altogether different from his usual dignified demeanor. Then Haller called to his wife at the top of his voice.

Dame Martha appeared flushed and panting from the gabled loft where she and the maids were arranging the piles of snowy linen, that were constantly being added to and stored away there in great presses, and then she stood leaning against the balustrade while her husband unfolded his news.

"Here is young Leo Monti, mother, direct from Florence. Do you remember what courtesy his father extended to me when business called me thither long years ago? No lad of his shall lodge at the inn while I have a bed to offer. He carried letters for me in his baggage, but I met him ere they were delivered. Let the guest chamber be prepared at once. for he will arrive anon. I only hastened on before that all might be in readiness."

Haller was in high good humor. That visit to Florence nearly thirty years before was the crowning event of his life, and he had lived it over again in memory and recital until his wife and daughter knew of it as well as he did. Indeed, the pretty Hilda could correct the slightest variation of the tale. Before he left the house, her father looked in at the

hall where she sat spinning by the fire, and could not resist the temptation of crossing over to her corner in order to communicate the news.

"And Hilda," said he, as he picked up his great felt hat to go out, "give heed to all this gentleman will tell you of his native land, for the tale has become somewhat worn as it falls from my old lips; moreover, he is a winsome youth, comely and straight of limb and marvelously well informed besides, having attended both the universities of Padua and of Paris. They tell me also at the inn, that he is a wondrous fine player upon the lute."

This description, though somewhat incoherent, probably conveyed all her father intended, for the young girl looked pleased, and then involuntarily picked the bits of flax from her garments, and smoothed out the creases of her kirtle.

Her father laughed. "Ha, pretty one," said he, "dost want a ribbon or bauble to add to thy charms?" then dropping the familiar "du," he added gravely, "No, my girl, working-clothes are good enough for working-days, and you look fresh and lovely enough to welcome a prince, though it is only your own old father who says so." Even as he spoke, the great double knocker resounded through the house, and Haller hastened down to meet his guest.

Just behind Hilda, in the deep stone recess of the window, Konrad, her father's favorite apprentice, had placed his work-bench, and as he handled his tools, and manipulated his delicate ware, the master's words had fallen on most unwilling ears. He loved Hilda with all his soul, and she had ever accepted his devotion as a perfect matter of course, with the calm sovereignty of youth and beauty. There existed between them, in fact, a sort of unspoken understanding, which, though eminently satisfactory to her, was fraught with pain and uncertainty to him. She was sincerely attached to Konrad, and had become so accustomed to his attentions that they were a necessary part of her life; while he, poor fellow, was both too proud and too shy to speak. Now, as he bent his blond head over his work, and thought of the brilliant stranger who was to come to them, his heart was sore. He had only been educated at the parochial school of St. Sebald, and the other would shine with the polish of Padua and Paris. He could sing with a pure, strong tenor, it was true, but his talent was quite untrained;

and this cultured foreigner could play on the lute, and was also, doubtless, well versed in minstrelsy. How could he, the simple prentice, vie with this fine Italian gentleman?

Look at him well as he sits there in the bright sunlight. Take note of his high brow with the flaxen hair cut straight across it, of his clear blue eyes, and the firm lines of his mouth. Look at him well, I say, for he is a fair type of the 16th century youth of Germany. Strong, sturdy fellows they were, with clear heads and active brains that were just beginning to absorb the new light that was flooding the world. On the work-bench in the window lay a couple of the heavy black-letter volumes that were becoming more and more familiar in German households, and in moments of rest from his work he turned eagerly to the mental food, for which the world had been starving. And thus it was that the rising generation grew quickly and responded intelligently to literature of all kinds, and was prepared to answer to the mighty voice that was, even then, ringing through all Germany, and awakening the echoes of Europe.

As Konrad carefully fingered the dainty filigree work in his hand, he strained his ears to listen for the arrival of the newcomer. He felt disturbed and anxious. It was no presumption on his part to aspire to Hilda's hand, for he was quite as well born as she was; and Haller treated him in every way more like a son of the house than as an apprenticed workman; and this had been particularly the case since his own boys had left to make their fortunes in the wide world beyond old Nuremberg's walls. When Konrad had served his time, and returned from his "Wanderjahr" a free man, there would be nothing to prevent his wooing her; but that, alas, was not in the near future, and the advent of the brilliant stranger filled him with gloomy forebodings. These were not dissipated when the master goldsmith ushered in the guest and, after a hasty introduction, withdrew to find his wife.

The young Italian was exceptionally handsome, the pure oval of his face being framed by thick curling locks that clustered softly on his temples and in his neck, and there shone out of his great liquid eyes a spirit of friendliness that won hearts for him wherever he went.

With a graceful inclination he kissed Hilda's hand courteously, and then said in a melodious voice and in passable

German : " Pray accept my duty, fair maiden. This is, in sooth, a most pleasant change from the inn where your father found me ; and in his kindness here he bids me tarry so long as my affairs detain me in Nuremberg."

Hilda dropped a little conventional courtesy, and shyly expressed pleasure at the prospect, adding her hope that his business would prove successful.

" Say rather pleasure than business," replied the young man. " I am traveling now for my instruction and amusement, more than for material profit. I have long dreamed of the hour when I should learn to know your famous city, and to meet one Albrecht Dürer, a marvelous artist, whose fame is still fresh in our town."

He spoke softly, in a rich, sweet tone that sounded positively musical to northern ears, and then turned to offer greetings to Dame Haller, who entered with her husband.

The conversation was carried on for some time, Konrad taking a bashful part in it when drawn out by the fascinating stranger, who admired his exquisite workmanship and graceful designs. Before all else the prentice was an artist, but though he loved his craft and wrought wonders with the costly metals that he used, he yet longed inexpressibly for light and color. He yearned for it without fully knowing all that he desired, and next to his love for Hilda came the wish to travel to Italy, and there to study art at its very source. The weird carvings and fantastic designs he was familiar with at home only half satisfied him. The Gothic imagination, which broke out in fantastic, often grotesque forms, in luxuriant foliation of capitals, and in strange gargoyles and finials, struck a kindred chord in his heart, to which he gave full play in the quaint designs and chasings of the great beakers and other objects of gold or silver that caught the reflection of the sun, as they stood in the old carved cupboard at the end of the hall. But he wanted something more, more even than kind Albrecht Dürer could give, though he was prodigal of cheering words and generous praise in his visits to the Haller mansion. What the lad needed, though he knew it not, was warmth and light, the blue skies and the inspiration of sunny Italy. His art was of a gentler kind than the North gave birth to then, and this messenger from that wonderful land made the German's blood tingle and his heart beat faster as he listened to Leo's glowing words.

Before he had passed a week in the house Leo Monti made every one feel as though he had lived there always, and even Konrad thawed towards him. Indeed, it was impossible not to be attracted by his winning ways and cheerful good humor. He appeared to find much to interest him in Nuremberg, and in particular poured over the famous Nuremberg chronicle illustrated by Albrecht Dürer, who always welcomed him gladly and with whom he passed hours daily.

Dürer was then hardly past the prime of life, though with some of his best work behind him. He had a sweet, grave face and gentle manners, and he hailed with gracious words and great delight this voice from the South, which awakened most pleasant memories. Leo could speak to him of the world of literature and art in Florence ; and having passed through Venice, could add to his tale stories of that city also, which recalled the friends and renewed the impressions Dürer had received there years before. And on his side he unfolded to Monti his marvelous method of engraving and explained his matchless use of the burin, and also showed him his many plates, some of them already well used. There was his celebrated "Passion," in copper, "The Knight, Death, and the Devil," and also the woodcuts of the Triumphal Arch of Maximilian, kindly, brilliant "Kaiser Max," with whom Dürer was ever in high favor ; and a host of others. Dürer could also display to Leo delicate carvings in ivory and oil paintings, rich in color, but conceived in the stiff restrained manner that had not yet thrown off the trammels and limitations of mediæval art.

Something more, however, than Dürer's influence kept the southern bird of passage contented in the gray old city. There was an unspeakable charm to be found in Burgher Haller's hospitable mansion. Day by day, Leo and the pretty Hilda were thrown more together, and with her innocent child's eyes, she looked out at the great world through his more experienced ones, and was fascinated by the marvels that she beheld. He appeared to her to be the embodiment of all that was beautiful and great, almost a being from a different world ; while he, in his turn, was drawn by the confiding look in her blue eyes, and her ill-concealed admiration of his narratives. Like many a man before and after him, Leo was easily flattered, and while watching her admiring, yet half shy glances, he laid himself out to win more. A soft

word here, a well-timed compliment, and a thousand small attentions turned her head completely, and captivated her little heart, while his own was filled with a fresh pleasure.

Only Konrad fumed and fretted in silence, and scowled darkly at his rival, who would see nothing but pleasantness, and persisted in answering the prentice's curt remarks with kind speech, so that even he was at times disarmed.

And so the days drifted away and turned into weeks and found Leo still there, and Hilda grew suddenly more demure, while at his approach her face gave unmistakable evidence of something different from what had ever been read there before. A certain sinking of the lashes, and a heightened color that was not all the result of bashfulness, betrayed her. A new, happy light shone in her eyes, and her step was more elastic as she sprang up the dark stairway, and she sang, even more blithely than usual, over her spinning. All of which filled Leo with delight, and drove poor Konrad to the verge of despair.

In the winter evenings the Burgher's household would gather in the great hall. Mistress Haller, soothed by the cheerful blaze on the hearth, and lulled to repose by the hum of conversation, would doze in her great chair, while her good man Adolph folded his hands over his portly form, and by well-timed questions kept the ball a-rolling; and, as usual, it was Leo Monti who took the principal part. The great stag hound, "Thor," would rise with a stretch and a yawn, only to fling himself down again close to where the blaze was hottest, and the huge logs crackled and broke, sending showers of sparks up the black throat of the chimney; and Leo and Hilda sat side by side on the oaken settle, while the firelight danced on their faces, and threw flickering gleams on the tiled floor, and lit up the rich carvings of the room. And young Leo shook back his dark curls and answered Haller's questions, until carried away by his own eloquence, he became the only speaker; and, to tell the truth, he spoke well.

Sometimes it was of his own father's time, and it would awaken the echoes of recollection in Haller's mind, as he heard again of the Magnificent Lorenzo, and then again all would listen entranced as the youth told of Perugino, of queer old Cosimo, and graceful Ghirlandajo; and far above all, of the mighty Angelo and divine Raphael, who were even then working their immortal wonders in Florence and Rome.

At times he would take his lute, and touching the strings gently, would pour forth glowing love songs, whose words, indeed, Hilda could not understand except by the interpretation he gave in his melting glances. The stanza, ballade, or sonetti of his graceful art would follow in rapid succession, until Konrad again losing patience, would give vent to his strong, fresh tenor, and make the room ring with the songs of Hans Sachs, the cobbler poet; or else would burst forth in the grand strains of "Ein feste Burg is unser Gott," which Luther had lately flung upon the world as a rallying cry; and then the prentices in the room beyond took up the chorus.

And thus they sat in the firelight, holding converse on music, poetry, and art, as well as on the momentous questions of the times, and Haller sat complacently in his high-backed chair and asked: "After all, what is there in life best worth living for, my children?"

"Truth," whispered the girl softly with her soul still full of the stirring music; and "Beauty," cried Leo boldly, as he gazed with fire in his eyes, at the slight figure and drooping head of the fair-haired maiden beside him. So they lived on in this enchanted world of their own, which Prince Charming had verily opened to their gaze, while the snow outside fell noiselessly in great soft flakes, shutting them in from the turbulent world; and all the time the beautiful season was approaching that would herald in the reign of peace and goodwill to all mankind.

Leo thus settled down to his life in Nuremberg with great contentment. He became intimate with the circle of young men that Albrecht Dürer had gathered about him; and though the Italian often found their manners uncouth, and methods laborious, he was quickly at home among them, and learned to respect their conscientious and diligent work.

The master passed among them with his gentle dignity and gracious ways, and imparted to them all some of his own reverential spirit. With him art was something vital and its inspiration well nigh beyond this world's ken. He believed in the messages it should carry, and hence the mystical, often to us intangible, sentiment with which his works are ever imbued.

He was the rare jewel of great price treasured in the setting of old Nuremberg's sculptured churches and gabled houses. As the poet has it:

"Here, when art was still religion, with a simple reverent heart,
Lived and labored Albrecht Dürer, the Evangelist of art."

Attracted by the grand nature of the man, Leo became one of his most devoted admirers.

Outside of Dürer's studio it was the old, old story.

As a flower expands to the influence of the sun's rays, so Hilda turned towards the light of her life, and grew and developed, unconsciously; and it came to pass, that she awoke suddenly to find that childhood's dreams had vanished, and that she had become a woman.

Konrad saw all this with a swelling heart, and followed the course of his successful rival with pain, rather than with jealousy, for he was, in truth, not surprised at Hilda's preference; but he brooded over it night and day. His apprenticeship was to end on Christmas-eve; but he had always hoped to pass that winter in the Haller household. The spring-time would be soon enough to start on his wanderings, and he had ever cherished a hope that when he departed for foreign lands, he might carry with him a promise of Hilda's love that would strengthen and help him until his return.

Everything seemed very different now. Leo and Hilda were altogether taken up with each other, and the Florentine was always at her side, whether it was in his usual place beside her on the settle before the fire, or when he followed her to the market, and insisted upon carrying home her little basket of eggs; and whatever he did, he was rewarded by one of those sudden, shy glances, that only he had the power to call forth.

The determination to say at least one word that might possibly arrest this new tide of interest, and turn her thoughts to days that had gone, grew so strong with Konrad that he waited one day when she came in alone, and begged for speech with her.

"What is it, Konrad?" said she, with a visible shrinking, and a sort of intuitive knowledge that the interview was one to be avoided, "what have I done? Wouldst chide me? Thou lookest as solemn as a father confessor about to receive a sinner's shrift."

"No, Hilda, I blame thee not," he answered gently, and begged again that she would listen to him.

"Not here," said she, glancing timidly about her, and then she suffered him to lead her into the garden behind the house.

How well they both knew it ! Even now, under the snow, lay sleeping the bulbs they had planted in the early fall, and she remembered that they had planned to watch together the tender crocuses and hyacinths when the first warm breath of spring should call them forth. It was all desolate now as the trees stretched their bare branches pitifully toward the gray sky, and a few scattered grasshalms pierced the white blanket, and lay bent and broken on their frozen covering. Even the droll stone figure on the fountain looked forlorn and cold with its cheerless load of icicles and snow.

They walked quickly down the narrow path whose rounded cobblestones had been freshly swept, and Hilda hoped that Konrad would spare her an interview in the little summer house, but he turned directly towards it, and as they entered, a flood of memories rushed over them both.

He reminded her of nothing ; but as they entered, he paused on the threshold, and turning, placed both hands on her shoulders and looked down to find the eyes that would not rise to meet his own, saying simply :

“Hilda, I love thee with all my soul,” and as her eyelids drooped lower and lower, until the lashes lay on the soft bloom of her cheek, she still felt his kind, firm grasp and listened, almost as in a dream, when he added : “That love shall ever be thine, and perchance in the years that are to come, my devotion may even prove more trustworthy than that of this stranger who has come to steal your heart away, and yet if thou lovest him best, I cannot find it in my heart to wish thee aught but joy.”

She still gave no answer, and after a long pause the prentice lifted his hands ; when she looked up he was gone.

With a lover's instinct Leo divined at once that something was in the air, though he only observed that Hilda was quieter than usual and received his attentions in an abstracted, embarrassed way that was quite new, and that Konrad was entirely engrossed in the chiselling of a lovely pair of golden clasps destined to hold together the covers of a famous book lately issued from the Koberger press.

Leo became therefore uneasy, and, if possible, even more devoted than usual. That evening, after the rest of the household had retired, he sought out Hilda's parents, and in an outburst of passionate eloquence he demanded, rather than asked for, her hand. After some demur, old Haller

consented, for he knew the match was a brilliant one for his burgher-born daughter, as Leo came of notable stock, and his family ranked high among the merchant princes of Florence. But the mother was harder to win over, as no wealth or position could repay her for the separation such a union would bring. The young man's rare personal attractions had taken them both by storm, however, and it was owing, at last, to his irresistible powers of persuasion that they were both gradually brought to sanction his suit.

The following day the lovers were allowed to meet alone in the hall, and he poured forth his tale to a most willing listener. This fiery wooing was very different from what poor Konrad offered, and Hilda found it altogether fitting that her suitor should kneel gallantly on one knee before her, while he kissed her hand fervently, and told in emotional language of his worship. His face was flushed with feeling, and his voice low and musical; and she, drawn by the subtle influence of love as she listened, at last gave to him freely the devotion for which the other had waited since he was a child. And Leo, with triumph in his eyes, and exultation in his heart, came close beside her, and as his arm stole about the slight figure, he murmured in her ear:

"Soon will I teach my love how one lives in other climes, where the sky is always blue, and the olives and orange trees blossom in the sun. Here under these cold skies, is no place for love like ours. Our lives must be one perpetual holiday." And he told her of the lovely Florentine country, of the beautiful city of flowers, of the walk on the "Lung Arno," and of the May feasts and festivals.

"All is not yet over in spite of the Prior of St. Marks," he whispered. "First we will to the Low Countries, where I still have letters to deliver to Jan Van Eyck and Lucas of Leyden, and then we will hasten to Italy, where my father and my lovely mother await us. Dost wot of the Madonna face in the painting Master Albrecht brought back with him from mine own home? She of the oval face, and with dark hair, banded over the clear brow? Even so appears my mother, who is still young and beautiful, and thou, my love, with thy blue eyes and flaxen locks, wilt shine among the darker beauty of our Tuscan maidens. Listen," said he, stretching for the lute; and then in tones soft and low, more in recitative than in song, though exquisitely musical, he mur-

mured to her rapt attention sonnet after sonnet from Petrarch's lore:

“Io amai sempre, ed amo forte amore,”

or,

“I' mi vivea di mia sorte contento,”

and others equally fervent.

Was it any wonder that the girl's heart melted away within her and she yielded to the sweet intoxication of giving herself unreservedly to the man she loved? Truly, they made a charming picture, his dark complexion and brown locks contrasting with the freshness of her fair Northern type.

The great news spread through the house apace, and the days that followed were full of rejoicings and congratulations.

Good Albrecht Dürer crossed over from his house by the “Thiergärtner Gate,” to bid them good luck and God speed on their life's journey. Even Konrad pressed their hands and wished them all happiness.

Leo bore himself like a young prince as he accepted the prim salutations and grave courtesies of Haller's burgher friends, but Hilda was sweet and shy and blushing, looking more than ever, to her lover's eyes, like a fresh flower.

Master Haller's excitement knew no bounds, and everything being satisfactorily arranged, he was in haste for the formal betrothal to take place, which in those days, almost partook of the nature of a wedding. Indeed, it was in part legally binding, and only needed the religious ceremony to complete the contract that was already half entered into. This event, he planned, should take place Christmas afternoon.

The festivities of “Christ Abend,” and the religious duties of the holy day would be over, and on the gladdest day of the whole year, and one particularly dear to every German heart, these two should meet and plight their troth before a host of friends.

The days sped by quickly, and Christmas-eve came with its bright home celebration, and midnight service in the dimly lighted church. As the happy pair knelt side by side, it seemed to Hilda as though she verily heard the voices of the angelic host in the grand chant and in the surging voice of the organ; and she felt her eyes fill with blissful tears, as Leo's hand closed over her own as they went out together in the darkness on their way home. Early in the morning the

young girl awoke, and flinging open her window, high up in the gabled roof of her father's house, she looked out into the frosty air, and listened to the bells as they came pealing to her over the snow. There they all were, St. Sebald's and St. Lawrence's and the fainter chimes of Chapels and Klosters, and high above all rang the great alarm bell with its quaint inscription—"I am called the Mass and the Fire bell; Hans Glockengeiser cast me. I sound to God's service and honor." All, all were swinging and calling forth with their iron tongues, that Christ was born to bring peace and good-will to all the Earth.

It was Christmas, and it was the day of her betrothal! Happy child! All shadows of life seemed far away, and it was with a heart overflowing with joy and love that she descended to meet the household at the morning meal.

As they gathered about the board there was one place vacant; Konrad was absent.

At Hilda's place there lay a small package, and when she opened it, she discovered a silver girdle marvelously wrought in cunning device, and held together by a golden clasp in which was set a fair pearl.

Though unknown to her, this represented Konrad's savings for many years, and was the hidden work of his leisure. He had intended it as his own betrothal gift before he started on his travels. In it he had worked his love and hopes. Now it lay before her, while another had taken his place, and beside it, in his clerkly hand, were these lines:

"I have gone, Hilda—wilt thou wear on thy betrothal day this memento, which I leave thee? Even as the strong, fine gold holds the pearl, which is an emblem of purity and truth, so may thy husband's love guard thee and cherish thee, that thus united happiness may follow thee always.

"May the good God bless thee. .

"KONRAD."

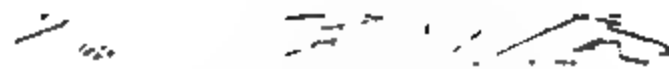
Leo came and read over her shoulder, then he clasped the girdle about her with his own hands, as he said: "I could not yield thee, Hilda, even to Konrad, but I feel proud that thou hast won so noble a heart as his, and we will try to take into our own lives something of his unselfishness and generous, self-sacrificing spirit."

THE CIPHER

BY GILBERT PARKER

The story of a silent love. From the National Observer. Illustrated by W. Granville Smith for Short Stories.

Talton was staying his horse by a spring at Guidon Hill when he first saw her. She was gathering May-apples ; her apron was full of them. He noticed that she did not stir until he rode almost upon her. Then she started, first with-



out looking round, as does an animal, dropping her head slightly to one side, though not quite appearing to listen. Suddenly, she wheeled swiftly on him, and her big eyes captured him. The look bewildered him. She was a creature of singular fascination. Her face flooded with expression.

Her eyes kept throwing light. She looked happy, yet grave withal: it was the gravity of an uncommon earnestness. She gazed through everything, and beyond. She was young—eighteen or so.

Talton raised his hat, and courteously called a good-morning at her. She did not reply by any word, but nodded quaintly, and blinked seriously, and yet blithely, on him. He was preparing to dismount. As he did so he paused, astonished that she did not speak at all. Her face did not have a familiar language; its vocabulary was its own. He slid from his horse, and, throwing his arm over its neck as it stooped to the spring, looked at her more intently, but respectfully too. She did not yet stir, but there came into her face a slight inflection of confusion or perplexity. Again he raised his hat to her, and, smiling, wished her a good-morning. Even as he did so a thought sprang in him. Understanding gave place to wonder; he interpreted the unusual look in her face.

Instantly he made a sign to her. To that her face responded with a wonderful speech—of relief and recognition. The corners of her apron dropped from her fingers, and the yellow May-apples fell about her feet. She did not notice this. She answered his sign with another, rapid, graceful, and meaning. He left his horse and advanced to her, holding out his hand simply, for he was a simple and honest man. Her response to this was spontaneous. The warmth of her fingers invaded him. Her eyes were full of questionings. He gave a hearty sign of admiration. She flushed with pleasure, but made a naïve, protesting gesture. She was deaf and dumb.

Talton had once a sister who was a mute. He knew that amazing primal gesture-language of this silent race whom God has blown like one-winged birds into the world. He had watched on his sister just such looks of absolute nature as flashed from this girl. They were comrades on the instant: he, reverential, gentle, protective; she, sanguine, candid, beautifully aboriginal in the freshness of her cipher thoughts. She saw the world naked, with a naked eye. She was utterly natural. She was the maker of exquisite, vital gesture-speech.

She glided out from among the May-apples and the long silken grass, to charm his horse with her hand. As she

started to do so, he hastened to prevent her, but, utterly surprised, he saw the horse whinny to her cheek, and arch his neck under her white palm—it was very white. Then the animal's chin sought her shoulder and stayed placid. It had never done so to any one before save Talton. Once, indeed, it had kicked a stableman to death. It lifted its

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head and caught with playful, shaking lips at her ear. Talton smiled : and so, as we said, their comradeship began.

He was a new officer of the Hudson Bay Company at Fort Guidon. She was the daughter of a ranchman. She had been educated by Father Corraine, the Jesuit missionary, Protestant though she was. He had learned the sign-lan-

guage while assistant-priest in a Parisian chapel for mutes. He taught her this gesture-tongue, which she, taking, rendered divine ; and with this she learned to read and write.

Her name was Ida.

Ida was faultless. Talton was not; but no man is. To her, however, he was the best that man can be. He was unselfish and altogether honest; and that is much for a man not a saint.

When Pierre came to know of their friendship he shook his head doubtfully. One day he was sitting on the hot side of a pine near his mountain-hut, soaking the sun. He saw them passing below him, along the edge of the hill across the ravine. He said to some one behind him in the shade, who was looking also: "What will be the end of that, eh?"

And the some one replied: "Faith, what the Serpent in the Wilderness couldn't cure."

"You think he'll play with her?"

"I think he'll do it without wishin' or willin', maybe. It'll be a case of kiss and ride away."

There was silence. Soon Pierre pointed down again. She stood upon a green mound with a cool hedge of rock behind her, her feet on a margin of solid sunlight, her forehead bared. Her hair sprinkled round her as she gently threw back her head. Her face was full on Talton. She was telling him something. Her gestures were rhythmical, and adorably balanced. Because they were continuous or only regularly broken, it was clear she was telling him a story. Talton gravely, delightedly, nodded response now and then, or raised his eyebrows in fascinated surprise. Pierre, watching, was only aware of vague impressions—not any distinct outline of the tale. At last he guessed it as a perfect pastoral—birds, hunting, deer, winds, sun-dials, cattle, shepherds, reaping. To Talton it was a new revelation. She was telling him things she had thought; she was recalling her life.

Towards the last she said, or gestured: "You can forget the winter but not the spring. You like to remember the spring. It is the beginning. When the daisy first peeps, when the tall young deer first stands upon its feet, when the first egg is seen in the oriole's nest, when the sap first sweats from the tree, when you first look into the eye of your friend: these you want to remember. . . ."

She paused upon this gesture—a light touch upon the forehead, then the hands stretched out, palms upward, with coaxing fingers. She seemed lost in it. Her eyes rippled, her lips pressed slightly, a delicate wine crept through her cheek, and tenderness wimpled all. She glided slowly from that almost statue-like repose into another gesture. Her eyes drew up from his, and looked away to plumbless distance, all glowing and childlike, and the new ciphers slowly said:

“But the spring dries away. We can only see a thing born once. And it may be ours, yet not ours. I have sighted the perfect Sharon-flower far upon Guidon, yet it was not mine; it was too distant; I could not reach it. I have seen the silver bullfinch floating along the cañon. I called to it and it came singing, and it was mine; yet I could not hear its song: and I let it go: it could not be happy so with me. . . . I stand at the gate of a great city, and see all and feel the great shuttles of sound—the roar and clack of wheels, the horse’s hoofs striking the ground, the hammer of bells; all: and yet it is not mine—it is far far away from me. It is one world, mine is another; and sometimes it is lonely, and the best things are not for me. But I have seen them, and it is pleasant to remember, and nothing can take from us the hour when things were born, when we saw the spring—nothing—never!”

Her manner of speech, as this went on, became exquisite in fineness, slower, and more dreamlike, until with downward protesting motions of the hand she said that “nothing—never!” Then a great sigh surged up her throat; her lips parted slightly, showing the warm, moist whiteness of her teeth; her hands, falling lightly, drew together and folded in front of her. She stood still.

Pierre had watched this scene intently: his chin in his hands, his elbows on his knees. Presently he drew himself up, ran a finger meditatively along his lip, and said to himself: “It is perfect. She is carved from the core of Nature. But this thing has danger for her . . . well . . . ah!”

A change in the scene before him caused this last expression of surprise.

Talton, rousing from the enchanting pantomime, took a step towards her; but she waved her hand pleadingly, restrainingly, and he paused. With his eyes he asked her

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mutely why? She did not answer; but, all at once transformed into a thing of abundant sprightliness, ran down the hill-side, tossing up her arms gaily. Yet her face was not all brilliance. Tears hung at her eyes. But Talton did not see these. He did not run, but walked quickly, following her; and his face had a determined look. Immediately a man rose up from behind a rock on the same side of the ravine, and shook clenched fists after the departing figures. Then he stood gesticulatingly angrily to himself, until, chancing to look up, he sighted Pierre, and straightway dived into the underbrush. Pierre rose to his feet, and said slowly; "Talton, there may be trouble for you, also. It is a tangled world."

Towards evening, Pierre sauntered to the house of Ida's father. Light of footstep, he came upon the girl suddenly. They had always been friends since the days when, at uncommon risk, he rescued her dog from a freshet on the Wild Moose River. She was sitting utterly still, her hands folded in her lap. He struck his foot smartly on the ground. She felt the vibration, and looked up. He doffed his hat and she held out her hand. He smiled, and took it, and as it lay in his, looked at it for a moment, musingly. She drew it back slowly. He was thinking that it was the most intelligent hand he had ever seen. . . . He determined to play a bold and surprising game. He had learned from her the alphabet of the fingers—that is, how to spell words. He knew little gesture-language. He therefore spelled slowly: "Hawley is angry because you love Talton."

The statement was so matter-of-fact, so sudden, that the girl had no chance. She flushed, and then paled. She shook her head firmly, however, and her finger slowly framed the reply: "You guess too much. Foolish things come to the idle."

"I saw you this afternoon," he slightly urged.

Her fingers trembled slightly. "There was nothing to see." She knew he could not have read her gestures. "I was telling a story."

"You ran from him—why?" This questioning was cruel that he might, in the end, be kind.

"The child runs from its shadow, the bird from its nest, the fish jumps from the water—that is nothing." She had recovered somewhat. But he: "The shadow follows the child, the bird comes back to its nest, the fish cannot live beyond the water. But it is sad when the child, in running, rushes into darkness and loses its shadow; when the nest falls from the tree; and the hawk catches the happy fishHawley saw you also."

Hawley, like Ida, was deaf and dumb. He lived over the mountains, but came often. It had been understood that, one day, she should marry him. It seemed fitting. She had said neither yes nor no. And now?

A quick tremor of trouble trailed over her face, then it became very still. Her eyes bended upon the ground steadily. Presently a bird hopped near, its head coquetting at her. She ran her hand gently along the grass towards it. The bird tripped on it. She lifted it to her chin, at which it picked tenderly. Pierre watched her keenly—admiring, pitying. He wished to serve her. At last, with a kiss upon its head, she gave it a light toss into air, and it soared, lark-like, straight up, and, hanging overhead, sang the day into the evening. Her eyes followed it. She could feel that it was singing. She smiled, and lifted a finger lightly towards it. Then she spelled to Pierre this: "It is singing to me. We imperfect things love each other."

"And what about loving Hawley, then?" Pierre persisted.

She did not reply; but a strange look came upon her, and in the pause Talton came from the house and stood beside them. At this Pierre lighted a cigarette, and with a good-natured nod to Talton walked away.

Talton stooped over her, pale and eager. "Ida," he gestured, "will you answer me now? Will you be my wife?"

She drew herself together with a little shiver. "No," was her steady reply. She ruled her face into stillness, so that it showed nothing of what she felt. She came to her feet wearily, and drawing down a cool flowering branch of chestnut, pressed it to her cheek.

"You do not love me?" he asked nervously.

"I am going to marry Luke Hawley," was her slow answer. She spelled the words. She used no gesture to that. The fact looked terribly hard, and inflexibly so. Talton was not a vain man, and he believed he was not loved. His heart crowded to his throat.

"Please go away now," she begged, with an anxious gesture. While the hand was extended, he reached and brought it to his lips, then quickly kissed her on the forehead, and walked away. She stood trembling, and as the fingers of one hand hung at her side they spelled mechanically these words: "It would spoil his life; I am only a mute—a dummy!"

As she stood so, she felt the approach of some one. She did not turn instantly, but, with the aboriginal instinct, listened, as it were, with her body; but presently faced about—to Hawley. He was red with anger. He had seen Talton kiss her. Less one of his faculties, he had proportionately less self-restraint. He caught her smartly by the arm, but, awed by the great calmness of her face, dropped it, and fell into a fit of sullenness. She spoke to him: he did not reply. She touched his arm: he still gloomed. All at once the full price of her sacrifice rushed upon her, and overpowered her. She had no help at her critical hour, not even from this man she had intended to bless. There came a swift revulsion, all passions stormed in her at once. Despair was the resultant of these forces. She swerved from him immediately, and ran hard towards the high-banked river!

Hawley did not follow her at once: he did not guess her purpose.

She had almost reached the leaping-place when Pierre shot from the trees and seized her. The impulse of this was so strong that they slipped, and quivered on the precipitous edge; but Pierre righted them, and presently they were safe.

Pierre held her hard by both wrists for a moment. Then, drawing her away, he loosed her, and spelled these words

slowly: "I understand. But you are wrong. Hawley is not the man. You must come with me. It is foolish to die."

The riot of her feelings, momentary despair, were gone. It was even pleasant to be mastered by Pierre's firmness. She was passive. Mechanically she went with him. Hawley approached. She looked at Pierre. Then she turned on other. "Yours is not the best love," she signed to him; "it does not trust; it is selfish." And she moved on.

But an hour later Talton caught her to his bosom and kissed her full on the lips. . . . And his right to do so continues to this day.



ZODOMIRSKY'S DUEL

BY ALEXANDRE DUMAS

The story of a Russian duel and its sad consequences. Translated from the French for the Strand Magazine.

At the time of this story our regiment was stationed in the dirty little village of Valins, on the frontier of Austria.

It was the fourth of May in the year 182—, and I, with several other officers, had been breakfasting with the aide-de-camp in honor of his birthday, and discussing the various topics of the garrison.

"Can you tell us without being indiscreet," asked Sub-Lieutenant Stamm of Andrew Michaelovitch, the aide-de-camp, "what the colonel was so eager to say to you this morning?"

"A new officer," he replied, "is to fill the vacancy of captain."

"His name?" demanded two or three voices.

"Lieutenant Zodomirsky, who is betrothed to the beautiful Mariana Ravensky."

"And when does he arrive?" asked Major Belayef.

"He *has* arrived. I have been presented to him at the colonel's house. He is very anxious to make your acquaintance, gentlemen, and I have therefore invited him to dine with us. But that reminds me, captain, you must know him," he continued, turning to me; "you were both in the same regiment at St. Petersburg."

"It is true," I replied. "We studied there together. He was then a brave, handsome youth, adored by his comrades, in every one's good graces, but of a fiery and irritable temper."

"Mademoiselle Ravensky informed me that he was a skilful duellist," said Stamm. "Well, he will do very well here; a duel is a family affair with us. You are welcome, Monsieur Zodomirsky. However quick your temper, you must be careful of it before me, or I shall take upon myself to cool it."

And Stamm pronounced these words with a visible sneer.

"How is it that he leaves the Guards? Is he ruined?" asked Cornet Naletoff.

"I have been informed," replied Stamm, "that he has just

inherited from an old aunt about twenty thousand roubles. No, poor devil! he is consumptive."

"Come, gentlemen," said the aide-de-camp, rising, "let us pass to the saloon and have a game of cards. Koloff will serve dinner while we play."

We had been seated some time, and Stamm, who was far from rich, was in the act of losing sixty roubles, when Koloff announced:

"Captain Zodomirsky."

"Here you are, at last!" cried Michaelovitch, jumping from his chair. "You are welcome."

Then, turning to us, he continued: "These are your new comrades, Captain Zodomirsky; all good fellows and brave soldiers."

"Gentlemen," said Zodomirsky, "I am proud and happy to have joined your regiment. To do so has been my greatest desire for some time, and if I am welcome, as you courteously say, I shall be the happiest man in the world."

"Ah! good-day, captain," he continued, turning to me and holding out his hand. "We meet again. You have not forgotten an old friend, I hope?"

As he smilingly uttered these words, Stamm, to whom his back was turned, darted at him a glance full of bitter hatred. Stamm was not liked in the regiment; his cold and taciturn nature had formed no friendship with any of us. I could not understand his apparent hostility toward Zodomirsky, whom I believed he had never seen before.

Some one offered Zodomirsky a cigar. He accepted it, lit it at the cigar of an officer near him, and began to talk gayly to his new comrades.

"Do you stay here long?" asked Major Belayef.

"Yes, monsieur," replied Zodomirsky. "I wish to stay with you as long as possible," and as he pronounced these words he saluted us all round with a smile. He continued, "I have taken a house near that of my old friend Ravensky, whom I knew at St. Petersburg. I have my horses there, an excellent cook, a passable library, a little garden, and a target; and there I shall be quiet as a hermit, and happy as a king. It is the life that suits me."

"Ha! you practise shooting!" said Stamm, in such a strange voice, accompanied by a smile so sardonic, that Zodomirsky regarded him in astonishment.

"It is my custom every morning to fire twelve balls," he replied.

"You are very fond of that amusement?" demanded Stamm, in a voice without any trace of emotion; adding, "I do not understand the use of shooting, unless it is to kill game."

Zodomirsky's pale face was flushed with a sudden flame. He turned to Stamm, and replied in a quiet but firm voice, "I think, monsieur, that you are wrong in calling it lost time to learn to shoot with a pistol; in our garrison life an imprudent word often leads to a meeting between comrades, in which case he who is known for a good shot inspires respect among those indiscreet persons who amuse themselves in asking useless questions."

"Oh! that is not a reason, captain. In duels, as in everything else, something should be left to chance. I maintain my first opinion, and say that an honorable man ought not to take too many precautions."

"And why?" asked Zodomirsky.

"I will explain to you," replied Stamm. "Do you play at cards, captain?"

"Why do you ask that question?"

"I will try to render my explanation clear, so that all will understand it. Every one knows that there are certain players who have an enviable knack, while shuffling the pack, of adroitly making themselves master of the winning card. Now, I see no difference, myself, between the man who robs his neighbor of his money and the one who robs him of his life." Then he added, in a way to take nothing from the insolence of his observation, "I do not say this to you, in particular, captain; I speak in general terms."

"It is too much as it is, monsieur!" cried Zodomirsky. "I beg Captain Alexis Stephanovitch to terminate this affair with you." Then, turning to me, he said, "You will not refuse me this request?"

"So be it, captain," replied Stamm quickly. "You have told me yourself you practise shooting every day, while I practise only on the day I fight. We will equalize the chances. I will settle details with Monsieur Stephanovitch."

Then he rose and turned to our host.

"*Au revoir*, Michaelovitch," he said. "I will dine at the colonel's." And with these words he left the room.

The most profound silence had been kept during this altercation; but, as soon as Stamm disappeared, Captain Pravdine, an old officer, addressed himself to us all.

"We cannot let them fight, gentlemen," he said.

Zodomirsky touched him gently on his arm.

"Captain," he said, "I am a new-comer among you; none of you know me. I have yet, as it were, to win my spurs; it is impossible for me to let this quarrel pass without fighting. I do not know what I have done to annoy this gentleman, but it is evident that he has a spite against me."

"The truth of the matter is that Stamm is jealous of you, Zodomirsky," said Cornet Naletoff. "It is well known that he is in love with Mademoiselle Ravensky."

"That, indeed, explains all," he replied. "However, gentlemen, I thank you for your kind sympathy in this affair from the bottom of my heart."

"And now to dinner, gentlemen!" cried Michaelovitch. "Place yourselves as you choose. The soup, Koloff; the soup!"

Everybody was very animated. Stamm seemed forgotten; only Zodomirsky appeared a little sad. Zodomirsky's health was drunk; he seemed touched with this significant attention and thanked the officers with a broken voice.

"Stephanovitch," said Zodomirsky to me, when dinner was over, and all had risen, "since M. Stamm knows you are my second and has accepted you as such, see him, and arrange everything with him; accept all his conditions; then meet Captain Pravdine and me at my rooms. The first who arrives will wait for the other. We are now going to Monsieur Ravensky's house."

"You will let us know the hour of combat?" said several voices.

"Certainly, gentlemen. Come and bid a last farewell to one of us."

We all parted at the Ravenskys' door, each officer shaking hands with Zodomirsky as with an old friend.

Stamm was waiting for me when I arrived at his house. His conditions were these—Two sabres were to be planted at a distance of one pace apart; each opponent to extend his arm at full length and fire at the word "*three*." One pistol alone was to be loaded.

I endeavored in vain to obtain another mode of combat.

"It is not a victim I offer to M. Zodomirsky," said Stamm, "but an adversary. He will fight as I propose, or I will not fight at all; but in that case I shall prove that M. Zodomirsky is brave only when sure of his own safety."

Zodomirsky's orders were imperative. I accepted.

When I entered Zodomirsky's rooms, they were vacant; he had not arrived. I looked round with curiosity. They were furnished in a rich but simple manner, and with evident taste. I drew a chair near the balcony and looked out over the plain. A storm was brewing; some drops of rain fell already, and thunder moaned.

At this instant the door opened, and Zodomirsky and Pravdine entered. I advanced to meet them.

"We are late, captain," said Zodomirsky, "but it was unavoidable. And what says Stamm?" he continued.

I gave him his adversary's conditions. When I had ended, a sad smile passed over his face; he drew his hand across his forehead and his eyes glittered with feverish lustre.

"I had foreseen this," he murmured. "You have accepted, I presume?"

"Did you not give me the order yourself?"

"Absolutely," he replied.

Zodomirsky threw himself in a chair by the table, in which position he faced the door. Pravdine placed himself near the window, and I near the fire. A presentiment weighed down our spirits. A mournful silence reigned.

Suddenly the door opened and a woman muffled in a mantle, and with the hood drawn over her face, pushed past the servant, and stood before us. She threw back the hood, and we recognized Mariana Ravensky!

Pravdine and I stood motionless with astonishment. Zodomirsky sprang toward her.

"Great heavens! what has happened, and why are you here?"

"Why am I here, George?" she cried. "Is it *you* who ask me, when this night is perhaps the last of your life? Why am I here? To say farewell to you. It is only two hours since I saw you, and not one word passed between us of to-morrow. Was that well, George?"

"But I am not alone here," said Zodomirsky in a low

voice. "Think, Mariana. Your reputation—your fair fame——"

"Are you not all in all to me, George? And in such a time as this what matters anything else?"

She threw her arm about his neck and pressed her head against his breast.

Pravdine and I made some steps to quit the room.

"Stay, gentlemen," she said, lifting her head. "Since you have seen me here, I have nothing more to hide from you, and perhaps you may be able to help me in what I am about to say."

Then, suddenly flinging herself at his feet:

"I implore you, I command you, George," she cried, "not to fight this duel with Monsieur Stamm. You will not end two lives by such a useless act! Your life belongs to me; it is no longer yours. George, do you hear? You will not do this."

"Mariana! Mariana! in the name of heaven do not torture me thus! Can I refuse to fight? I should be dishonored—lost! If I could do so cowardly an act, shame would kill me more surely than Stamm's pistol."

"Captain," she said to Pravdine, "you are esteemed in the regiment as a man of honor; you can, then, judge about affairs of honor. Have pity on me, captain, and tell him he *can* refuse such a duel as this. Make him understand that it is not a duel, but an assassination; speak, speak, captain, and if he will not listen to me, he will to you."

Pravdine was moved. His lips trembled and his eyes were dimmed with tears. He rose, and, approaching Mariana, kissed her hand, and said with a trembling voice:

"To spare you any sorrow, mademoiselle, I would lay down my life; but to counsel M. Zodomirsky to be unworthy of his uniform by refusing this duel is impossible. Each adversary, your betrothed as well as Stamm, has a right to propose his conditions. But whatever be the conditions, the captain is in circumstances which render this duel absolutely necessary. He is known as a skilful duellist; to refuse Stamm's conditions were to indicate that he counts upon his skill."

"Enough, Mariana, enough," cried George. "Unhappy girl! you do not know what you demand. Do you wish me to fall so low that you yourself would be ashamed of me? I ask you, are you capable of loving a dishonored man?"

Mariana had let herself fall upon a chair. She rose, pale as a corpse, and began to put her mantle on.

"You are right, George; it is not I who would love you no more, but you who would hate me. We must resign ourselves to our fate. Give me your hand, George; we may never see each other again. To-morrow! to-morrow! my love."

She threw herself upon his breast, without tears, without sobs, but with a profound despair.

She wished to depart alone, but Zodomirsky insisted on leading her home.

Midnight was striking when he returned.

"You had better both retire," said Zodomirsky as he entered. "I have several letters to write before sleeping. At five we must be at the rendezvous."

I felt so wearied that I did not want telling twice. Pravdine passed into the saloon, I into Zodomirsky's bedroom, and the master of the house into his study.

The cool air of the morning woke me. I cast my eyes upon the window, where the dawn commenced to appear. I heard Pravdine also stirring. I passed into the saloon, where Zodomirsky immediately joined us. His face was pale but serene.

"Are the horses ready?" he inquired.

I made a sign in the affirmative.

"Then let us start," he said.

We mounted into the carriage, and drove off.

"Ah," said Pravdine all at once, "there is Michaelovitch's carriage. Yes, yes, it is he with one of ours, and there is Naletoff, on his Circassian horse. Good! the others are coming behind. It is well we started so soon."

The carriage had to pass the house of the Ravenskys. I could not refrain from looking up; the poor girl was at her window, motionless as a statue. She did not even nod to us.

"Quicker! quicker!" cried Zodomirsky to the coachman. It was the only sign by which I knew that he had seen Mariana.

Soon we distanced the other carriages, and arrived upon the place of combat—a plain where two great pyramids rose, passing in this district by the name of the "Tomb of the Two Brothers." The first rays of the sun darting through the trees began to dissipate the mists of night.

Michaelovitch arrived immediately after us, and in a few

minutes we formed a group of nearly twenty persons. Then we heard other steps upon the gravel. They were those of our opponents. Stamm walked first, holding in his hand a box of pistols. He bowed to Zodomirsky and the officers.

"Who gives the word to fire, gentlemen?" he asked.

The two adversaries and the seconds turned toward the officers, who regarded them with perplexity.

No one offered. No one wished to pronounce that terrible "three" which would sign the fate of a comrade.

"Major," said Zodomirsky to Belayef, "will you render me this service?"

Thus asked, the major could not refuse, and he made a sign that he accepted.

"Be good enough to indicate our places, gentlemen," continued Zodomirsky, giving me his sabre and taking off his coat. "Then load, if you please."

"That is useless," said Stamm; "I have brought the pistols; one of the two is loaded, the other has only a cap."

"Do you know which is which?" said Pravdine.

"What does it matter?" replied Stamm. "Monsieur Zodomirsky will choose."

"It is well," said Zodomirsky.

Belayef drew his sabre and thrust it in the ground midway between the two pyramids. Then he took another sabre and planted it before the first. One pace alone separated the two blades. Each adversary was to stand behind a sabre, extending his arm at full length. In this way each had the muzzle of his opponent's pistol at six inches from his heart. While Belayef made these preparations Stamm unbuckled his sabre and divested himself of his coat. His seconds opened his box of pistols, and Zodomirsky, approaching, took without hesitation the nearest to him. Then he placed himself behind one of the sabres.

Stamm regarded him closely; not a muscle of Zodomirsky's face moved, and there was not about him the least appearance of bravado, but of the calmness of courage.

"He is brave," murmured Stamm.

And taking the pistol left by Zodomirsky, he took up his position behind the other sabre, in front of his adversary.

They were both pale, but while the eyes of Zodomirsky burned with implacable resolution, those of Stamm were uneasy and shifting. I felt my heart beat loudly.

Belayef advanced. All eyes were fixed on him.

"Are you ready, gentlemen?" he asked.

"We are waiting, major," replied Zodomirsky and Stamm together, and each lifted his pistol before the breast of the other.

A death-like silence reigned. Only the birds sang in the bushes near the place of combat. In the midst of this silence the major's voice resounding made every one tremble.

"One."

"Two."

"*Three.*"

Then we heard the sound of the hammer falling on the cap of Zodomirsky's pistol. There was a flash, but no sound followed it.

Stamm had not fired, and continued to hold the mouth of his pistol against the breast of his adversary.

"Fire!" said Zodomirsky, in a voice perfectly calm.

"It is not for you to command, monsieur," said Stamm, "it is I who must decide whether to fire or not, and that depends on how you answer what I am about to say."

"Speak, then; but in the name of heaven speak quickly."

"Never fear, I will not abuse your patience."

We were all ears.

"I have not come to kill you, monsieur," continued Stamm, "I have come with the carelessness of a man to whom life holds nothing, while it has kept none of the promises it has made to him. You, monsieur, are rich, you are beloved, you have a promising future before you; life must be dear to you. But fate has decided against you: it is you who must die and not I. Well, Monsieur Zodomirsky, give me your word not to be so prompt in the future to fight duels, and I will not fire."

"I have not been prompt to call you out, monsieur," replied Zodomirsky in the same calm voice; "you have wounded me by an outrageous comparison, and I have been compelled to challenge you. Fire, then; I have nothing to say to you."

"My conditions cannot wound your honor," insisted Stamm. "Be our judge, major," he added, turning to Belayef. "I will abide by your opinion; perhaps M. Zodomirsky will follow my example."

"M. Zodomirsky has conducted himself as bravely as pos-

sible; if he is not killed, it is not his fault." Then, turning to the officers round, he said:

"Can M. Zodomirsky accept the imposed condition?"

"He can! he can!" they cried; "and without staining his honor in the slightest "

Zodomirsky stood motionless.

"The captain consents," said old Pravdine, advancing.

"Yes, in the future he will be less prompt."

"It is you who speak, captain, and not M. Zodomirsky," said Stamm.

"Will you affirm my words, Monsieur Zodomirsky?" asked Pravdine, almost supplicating in his eagerness.

"I consent," said Zodomirsky, in a voice barely intelligible.

"Hurrah! hurrah!" cried all the officers, enchanted with this termination. Two or three threw up their caps.

"I am more charmed than any one," said Stamm, "that all has ended as I desired. Now, captain, I have shown you that before a resolute man the art of shooting is nothing in a duel, and that if the chances are equal a good shot is on the same level as a bad one. I did not wish in any case to kill you. Only I had a great desire to see how you would look death in the face. You are a man of courage; accept my compliments. The pistols were not loaded." Stamm, as he said this, fired off his pistol. There was no report!

Zodomirsky uttered a cry which resembled the roar of a wounded lion.

"By my father's soul!" he cried, "this is a new offence, and more insulting than the first. Ah! it is ended, you say? No, monsieur, it must recommence, and this time the pistols shall be loaded, if I have to load them myself."

"No, captain," replied Stamm, tranquilly. "I have given you your life, I will not take it back. Insult me if you wish, I will not fight with you."

"Then it is with me whom you will fight, Monsieur Stamm," cried Pravdine, pulling off his coat. "You have acted like a scoundrel; you have deceived Zodomirsky and his seconds, and in five minutes if your dead body is not lying at my feet, there is no such thing as justice."

Stamm was visibly confused. He had not bargained for this.

"And if the captain does not kill you, I will!" said Naletoff.

"Or I!" "Or I!" cried with one voice all the officers.

"The devil! I cannot fight with you all," replied Stamm. "Choose one among you, and I will fight with him; though it will not be a duel, but an assassination."

"Reassure yourself, monsieur," replied Major Belayef; "we will do nothing that the most scrupulous honor can complain of. All our officers are insulted, for under their uniform you have conducted yourself like a rascal. You cannot fight with all; it is even probable you will fight with none. Hold yourself in readiness, then. You are to be judged. Gentlemen, will you approach?"

We surrounded the major, and the fiat went forth without discussion. Every one was of the same opinion.

Then the major, who had played the *rôle* of president, approached Stamm, and said to him:

"Monsieur, you are lost to all the laws of honor. Your crime was premeditated in cold blood. You have made M. Zodomirsky pass through all the sensations of a man condemned to death, while you were perfectly at ease, you who knew that the pistols were not loaded. Finally, you refuse to fight with the man whom you have doubly insulted."

"Load the pistols! load them!" cried Stamm, exasperated. "I will fight with any one!"

But the major shook his head with a smile of contempt.

"No, Monsieur Lieutenant," he said, "you will fight no more with your comrades. You have stained your uniform. We can no longer serve with you. The officers have charged me to say that, not wishing to make your deficiencies known to the Government, they ask you to give in your resignation on the ground of bad health. The surgeon will sign all necessary certificates. To-day is the 3d of May: you have from now to the 3d of June to quit the regiment."

"I will quit it, certainly; not because it is your desire, but mine," said Stamm, picking up his sabre and putting on his coat.

Then he leaped upon his horse, and galloped off toward the village, casting a last malediction to us all.

We all pressed round Zodomirsky. He was sad; more than sad, gloomy.

"Why did you force me to consent to this scoundrel's conditions, gentlemen?" he said. "Without you, I should never have accepted them."

"My comrades and I," said the major, "will take all the responsibility. You have acted nobly, and I must tell you in the name of us all, M. Zodomirsky, that you are a man of honor." Then, turning to the officers: "Let us go, gentlemen; we must inform the colonel of what has passed."

We mounted into the carriages. As we did so we saw Stamm in the distance galloping up the mountain side from the village upon his horse. Zodomirsky's eyes followed him.

"I know not what presentiment torments me," he said, "but I wish his pistol had been loaded, and that he had fired."

He uttered a deep sigh, then shook his head, as if with that he could disperse his gloomy thoughts.

"Home," he called to the driver.

We took the same route that we had come by, and consequently again passed Mariana Ravensky's window. Each of us looked up, but Mariana was no longer there.

"Captain," said Zodomirsky, "will you render me a service?"

"Whatever you wish," I replied.

"I count upon you to tell my poor Mariana the result of this miserable affair."

"I will do so. And when?"

"Now. The sooner the better. Stop!" cried Zodomirsky to the coachman. He stopped, and I descended, and the carriage drove on.

Zodomirsky had hardly entered when he saw me appear in the doorway of the saloon. Without doubt my face was pale, and wore a look of consternation, for Zodomirsky sprang toward me, crying:

"Great heavens, captain! What has happened?"

I drew him from the saloon.

"My poor friend, haste, if you wish to see Mariana alive. She was at her window; she saw Stamm gallop past. Stamm being alive, it followed that you were dead. She uttered a cry, and fell. From that moment she has never opened her eyes."

"Oh, my presentiment!" cried Zodomirsky, "my presentiment!" and he rushed, hatless and without his sabre, into the street.

On the staircase of Mlle. Ravensky's house he met the doctor, who was coming down.

"Doctor," he cried, stopping him, "she is better, is she not?"

"Yes," he answered, "better, because she suffers no more."

"Dead!" murmured Zodomirsky, growing white, and supporting himself against the wall. "Dead!"

"I always told her, poor girl! that, having a weak heart, she must avoid all emotion——"

But Zodomirsky had ceased to listen. He sprang up the steps, crossed the hall and the saloon, calling like a madman, "Mariana! Mariana!"

At the door of the sleeping-chamber stood Mariana's old nurse, who tried to bar his progress. He pushed by her, and entered the room.

Mariana was lying motionless and pale upon her bed. Her face was calm as if she slept. Zodomirsky threw himself upon his knees by the bedside, and seized her hand. It was cold, and in it was clinched a curl of black hair.

"My hair!" cried Zodomirsky, bursting into sobs.

"Yes, yours," said the old nurse; "your hair that she cut off herself on quitting you at St. Petersburg. I have often told her it would bring misfortune to one of you."

If any one desires to learn what became of Zodomirsky, let him inquire for Brother Vassili, at the Monastery of Troitza.

The holy brothers will show the visitor his tomb. They know neither his real name nor the causes which, at twenty-six, had made him take the robe of a monk. Only they say, vaguely, that it was after a great sorrow, caused by the death of a woman whom he loved.

ETCHING : THE ROSEBUSH

BY HARTLEY COURTLANDT DAVIS

A pathetic incident of Western life. Written for Short Stories—
Copyrighted. Illustrated by H. M. Walcott.

Ole was six. The prairie was his home. He saw the sky melt into it on every side.

Ole was not lonely, although there were no children for him to play with. The rosebush was the only companion he wanted. A big, red-faced man, who was trying to sell his father a mowing machine, had given him the rosebush. He planted it near the stables, which was like all the stables, an excavation in the ground covered with sod on a slender wooden framework.

The rosebush had bloomed for the first time, a snowy fragrant ball as big as Ole's two fists. The roses which grow wild on the prairie are a pale pink, and they have only four petals, which the wind quickly tears away. He guarded the rosebush as a mother would a child.

He was lying at its
it softly and sweetly a
Its rich fragrance into
Now and then he
touch one of the leaves
a caress as tender as a
mer breeze. He no
that everything was
turning green. His
eyes opened in won-

der. The atmosphere had grown cold. Away to the northwest he saw a cloud shaped like the funnel which his grandmother used in pouring vinegar into a jug. The cloud was as black as his grandmother's best gown, which she only wore at weddings and funerals.

Three or four miles away a cloud of dust arose as if it were being blown before marching cavalry. It was rushing upon him with awful rapidity. Ole threw his arms about his rosebush, his face drawn in fear. From the house he heard his grandmother calling him to come in and go down into the

pit. He heard the growl of the monster, and his slender body quivered as he pressed the rosebush closely to his breast.

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aloud. The cry was carried miles away.

When his grandmother made her way from the cyclone pit through the ruins of the shanty and went to look for Ole, she found him four hundred feet away. He was dead. The

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NOT ON THE PASSENGER LIST

BY ROBERT BARR (LUKE SHARP)

A weird story of the sea. From "In a Steamer Chair."—Cassell Publishing Company.

The well-sworn Lie, franked to the world with all
The circumstance of proof,
Cringes abashed, and sneaks along the wall
At the first sight of Truth.

The *Gibrontus* of the Hot Cross Bun Line was at one time the best ship of that justly celebrated fleet. All steamships have, of course, their turn at the head of the fleet until a better boat is built, but the *Gibrontus* is even now a reasonably fast and popular boat. An accident happened on board the *Gibrontus* some years ago which was of small importance to the general public, but of some moment to Richard Keeling—for it killed him. The poor man got only a line or two in the papers when the steamer arrived at New York, and then they spelled his name wrong. It happened something like this: Keeling was wandering around very late at night, when he should have been in his bunk, and he stepped on a dark place that he thought was solid. As it happened, there was nothing between him and the bottom of the hold but space. They buried Keeling at sea, and the officers knew absolutely nothing about the matter when inquisitive passengers, hearing rumors, questioned them. This state of things very often exists both on sea and land, as far as officials are concerned. Mrs. Keeling, who had been left in England while her husband went to America to make his fortune and tumbled down a hole instead, felt aggrieved at the company. The company said that Keeling had no business to be nosing around dark places on the deck at that time of night, and doubtless their contention was just. Mrs. Keeling, on the other hand, held that a steamer had no right to have such mantraps open at any time, night or day, without having them properly guarded, and in that she was also probably correct. The company was very sorry, of course, that the thing had occurred; but they refused to pay for Keeling unless compelled to do so by the law of the land, and there matters stood

No one can tell what the law of the land will do when it is put in motion, although many people thought that if Mrs. Keeling had brought a suit against the Hot Cross Bun Company, she would have won it. But Mrs. Keeling was a poor woman, and you have to put a penny in the slot when you want the figures of justice to work, so the unfortunate creature signed something which the lawyer of the company had written out, and accepted the few pounds which Keeling had paid for Room 18 on the *Gibrontus*. It would seem that this ought to have settled the matter, for the lawyer told Mrs. Keeling he thought the company acted very generously in refunding the passage money; but it didn't settle the matter. Within a year from that time, the company voluntarily paid Mrs. Keeling £2,100 for her husband.

Now that the occurrence is called to your mind, you will perhaps remember the editorial one of the leading London dailies had on the extraordinary circumstance, in which it was very ably shown that the old saying about corporations having no souls to be condemned, or bodies to be kicked, did not apply in these days of commercial honor and integrity. It was a very touching editorial, and it caused tears to be shed on the Stock Exchange, the members having had no idea, before reading it, that they were so noble and generous.

How, then, was it that the Hot Cross Bun Company did this commendable act when their lawyer took such pains to clear them of all legal liability? The purser of the *Gibrontus*, who is now old and superannuated, could probably tell you if he liked.

When the negotiations with Mrs. Keeling had been brought to a satisfactory conclusion by the lawyer of the company, and when that gentleman was rubbing his hands over his easy victory, the good ship *Gibrontus* was steaming out of the Mersey on her way to New York. The stewards in the grand saloon were busy getting things in order for dinner, when a wan and gaunt passenger spoke to one of them.

"Where have you placed me at table?" he asked.

"What name, sir?" asked the steward.

"Keeling."

The steward looked up along the main tables, up one side and down the other, reading the cards, but nowhere did he

find the name he was in search of. Then he looked at the small tables, but also without success."

"How do you spell it, sir?" he asked the patient passenger.

"K-double-e-l-i-n-g."

"Thank you, sir."

Then he looked up and down the four rows of names on the passenger list he held in his hand, but finally shook his head.

"I can't find your name on the passenger list," he said. "I'll speak to the purser, sir."

"I wish you would," replied the passenger, in a listless way, as if he had not much interest in the matter. The passenger, whose name was not on the list, waited until the steward returned.

"Would you mind stepping into the purser's room for a moment, sir? I'll show you the way, sir."

When the passenger was shown into the purser's room that official said to him, in the urbane manner of pursers:

"Might I look at your ticket, sir?"

The passenger pulled a long pocketbook from the inside of his coat, opened it, and handed the purser the document it contained. The purser scrutinized it sharply, and then referred to a list he had on the desk before him.

"This is very strange," he said at last. "I never knew such a thing to occur before, although, of course, it is always possible. The people on shore have in some unaccountable manner left your name out of my list. I am sorry you have been put to any inconvenience, sir."

"There has been no inconvenience so far," said the passenger, "and I trust there will be none. You find the ticket regular, I presume?"

"Quite so—quite so," replied the purser. Then, to the waiting steward, "Give Mr. Keeling any place he prefers at the table which is not already taken. You have Room 18."

"That was what I bought at Liverpool."

"Well, I see you have the room to yourself, and I hope you will find it comfortable. Have you ever crossed with us before, sir? I seem to recollect your face."

"I have never been to America."

"Ah! I see so many faces, of course, that I sometimes fancy I know a man when I don't. Well, I hope you will have a pleasant voyage, sir."

"Thank you."

No. 18 was not a popular passenger. People seemed instinctively to shrink from him, although it must be admitted that he made no advances. All went well until the *Gibrontus* was half-way over. One forenoon the chief officer entered the captain's room with a pale face, and shutting the door after him, said:

"I am very sorry to have to report, sir, that one of the passengers has fallen into the hold."

"Good heavens," cried the captain. "Is he hurt?"

"He is killed, sir."

The captain stared aghast at his subordinate.

"How did it happen? I gave the strictest orders that those places were on no account to be left unguarded."

Although the company had held to Mrs. Keeling that the captain was not to blame, their talk with that gentleman was of an entirely different tone.

"That is the strange part of it, sir. The hatch has not been opened this voyage, sir, and was securely bolted down."

"Nonsense! Nobody will believe such a story! Someone has been careless! Ask the purser to come here, please."

When the purser saw the body, he recollected, and came as near fainting as a purser can.

They dropped Keeling overboard in the night, and the whole affair was managed so quietly that nobody suspected anything, and, what is the most incredible thing in this story, the New York papers did not have a word about it. What the Liverpool office said about the matter nobody knows, but it must have stirred up something like a breeze in that strictly business locality. It is likely they pooh-poohed the whole affair, for, strange to say, when the purser tried to corroborate the story with the dead man's ticket the document was nowhere to be found.

The *Gibrontus* started out on her next voyage from Liverpool with all her colors flying, but some of her officers had a vague feeling of unrest within them which reminded them of the time they first sailed on the heaving seas. The purser was seated in his room, busy, as pursers always are at the beginning of a voyage, when there was a rap at the door.

"Come in!" shouted the important official, and there entered unto him a stranger, who said:

"Are you the purser?"

"Yes, sir. What can I do for you?"

"I have room No. 18."

"What!" cried the purser, with a gasp, almost jumping from his chair. Then he looked at the robust man before him, and sank back with a sigh of relief. It was not Keeling.

"I have room No. 18," continued the passenger, "and the arrangement I made with your people in Liverpool was that I was to have the room to myself. I do a great deal of shipping over your——"

"Yes, my dear sir," said the purser, after having looked rapidly over his list, "you have No. 18 to yourself."

"So I told the man who is unpacking his luggage there; but he showed me his ticket, and it was issued before mine. I can't quite understand why your people should——"

"What kind of a looking man is he?"

"A thin, unhealthy, cadaverous man, who doesn't look as if he would last till the voyage ends. I don't want *him* for a room mate, if I have to have one. I think you ought——"

"I will, sir. I will make it all right. I suppose, if it should happen that a mistake has been made, and he has the prior claim to the room, you would not mind taking No. 24—it is a larger and better room."

"That will suit me exactly."

So the purser locked his door and went down to No. 18.

"Well?" he said to its occupant.

"Well," answered Mr. Keeling, looking up at him with his cold and fishy eyes.

"You're here again, are you?"

"I'm here again, and I *will* be here again. And again and again and again and again."

"Now, what the——" Then the purser hesitated a moment, and thought perhaps he had better not swear, with that icy, clammy gaze fixed upon him. "What object have you in all this?"

"Object? The very simple one of making your company live up to its contract. From Liverpool to New York, my ticket reads. I paid for being landed in the United States, not for being dumped overboard in mid-ocean. Do you think you can take me over? You have had two tries at it and have not succeeded. Yours is a big and powerful company, too."

"If you know we can't do it, then why do you——" The purser hesitated.

"Pester you with my presence?" suggested Mr. Keeling. "Because I want you to do justice. Two thousand pounds is the price, and I will raise it one hundred pounds every trip."

This time the New York papers got hold of the incident, but not of its peculiar features. They spoke of the extraordinary carelessness of the officers in allowing practically the same accident to occur twice on the same boat. When the *Gibrontus* reached Liverpool all the officers, from the captain down, sent in their resignations. Most of the sailors did not take the trouble to resign, but cut for it. The managing director was annoyed at the newspaper comments, but laughed at the rest of the story. He was invited to come over and interview Keeling for his own satisfaction, most of the officers promising to remain on the ship if he did so. He took Room 18 himself. What happened I do not know, for the purser refused to sail again on the *Gibrontus* and was given another ship.

But this much is certain. When the managing director got back, the company generously paid Mrs. Keeling £2,100.



THE PENDRAGONS

BY FREDERICK R. BURTON

This amusing story shows the possibilities of romance even in a lawyer's office. Written for Short Stories.—Copyrighted. Illustrations by Charles Lederer.

HAT do you suppose has happened now?
By thunder! What do you suppose can
have happened? Eh? By the mischief!
Humph! What do you think?"

It was thus that old John Pendragon
snorted and raved when once we were
within the security of my private office.

I had kept him waiting several minutes,
and during the delay the accumulated passions and other
emotions of a day had been struggling for utterance. I
shall never forget the picture he presented; a tall, broad-
shouldered man, heavy and sturdy as an oak, florid com-
plexion and half gray hair; his shaven face set in hard
determined lines that had been partly traced there by char-
acter and partly by close application to work for many years;
he sat with his hands gripping the arms of the chair into
which he had thrown himself, and glared at me from under
shaggy eyebrows.

"Well, Pen," I said quietly, for I knew that my old friend's
explosiveness never boded anything that other people would

under serious, "what is it?
Has your cook struck?"

"Humph!" he snorted:
"I should say not. Hang
the cook. Won't you
take me seriously! Lis-
ten: Jim wants to get
married!"

With this the lawyer
banged himself against
the back of his chair and
looked at me as if he ex-
pected me to throw up my
hands, or faint, or exclaim against fate, or something of

the sort; and when I simply looked as sympathetic as I could, and cautiously remarked "Well?" he worked himself into a paroxysm of excitement.

"Well?" he exclaimed; "it's not at all well, sir! Confound it, do you understand me? Jim, *Jim*, I tell you, my boy Jim, has set his thundering mind on getting married. Now what *do* you think of that, eh?"

Good old Pendragon! how hard he made it for his friends at times! What could I say! here was an episode in his career that appealed to him with infinite force, and to me it could only seem as a very natural, probably commendable, episode in the career of his son. What had I to do with it? The question was irritating, and the impulse was strong to dismiss the affair as one that concerned me not at all; but the long intimacy with Pendragon, the memory of his never failing, never faltering loyalty to his friends, happily restrained the impatient utterance that sprung to the edges of my lips.

"So, my friend," I said, smothering my impatience, "it has come to that, has it? Well, you were married once, you know."

"Aye, so I was, God bless the day!" he exclaimed; "but, as you well know, it was not until I had fought my way unaided to a position in the world where my ability to support a family decently was unquestioned. I knew where I stood; I had money in the bank; I had good clients, you among them, confound your unsympathetic top-knot! When I was Jim's age I was grubbing away like sin in a country law office. I was glad to be able to meet my board bill and wear store clothes, and if it hadn't been that you fellows in business are bound to get into litigation, I'd have been grubbing still, I guess. No matter, that's past and well done, too, if I can figure my bank balances correctly."

After a moment he continued, with a subdued earnestness that was almost pathetic:

"Now, Jim, you see, is only twenty-four. I've given him a college education and done everything else I could to fit him properly for making the battle in better shape than I did. You may say that I've got enough to provide for him, but I tell you, old man, it wouldn't be fair to Jim, ignorant little chap, to set him up in the world without any idea of the value of a dollar, and that's saying nothing of Jim's children. Thunder and Mars, man, I haven't got enough to provide all

posterity with a comfortable living, much as I'd like to. No, sir ! My boy's got to learn to fight his own way, and that's why I put him at the bottom of the ladder in my own office. When I was his age I barred sentiment ; I went to my attic room content to know that I could pay a dollar a week for the rent of it. I shut that thing we call heart against all snares, and kept it shut until I was ready to consider something else besides struggle and money. I hoped Jim would do the same, and he won't. What am I to do with him ?"

"It's hard to say," I responded ; "I don't know the circumstances. Your son has always impressed me as a sterling fellow, level-headed, and not prone to foolishness. To be plain, whom does he want to marry ?"

"That's just it," said Pendragon ; "I don't know her. I believe her name is Ingalls. From what Jim says I judge her to be one of these porcelain girls, you know, nice and ornamental, but bound to break if you happen to look at 'em accidentally. Her folks have got just enough money to enable them to poke their heads above the crowd, and not enough to do any more. They've given the girl all the frills of high life ; she's accomplished, she can play the piano, sing from the opera, paint roses, and make lace filigrees for the back of your chair. I presume she reads Browning, and she could probably parleyvous with a Frenchman ; but put up a loaf of bread ? wash the dishes ? trundle babies round the block ? or do anything else useful ? I guess not !"

So my dear old friend rattled on, getting calmer every moment, seeming to find a grateful relief in unburdening himself to a listener ; but no quiet suggestions, no plea in behalf of his son's young life and its promise of happiness and success, would avail to shake the determination which he had sought in my office to clinch, to oppose by every material means at his command this marriage of his son.

For a full week after the conversation noted above, John Pendragon and his son James continued to meet daily in the lawyer's Wall street office, and to perform their respective shares of the work arising from the old man's lucrative practice. James was not a partner in the business. He held there actually the situation of a clerk, and according to his father's theory, he would have to take his chance for advancement under the same conditions that would be imposed upon

the dozen or so other clerks in the office. But, as his friends well knew, John Pendragon was by no means the stern Spartan that he pretended to be; he fairly idolized his boy, and if he made any mistakes in bringing the youngster up, those errors should be laid to human frailty and not at all to parental tyranny.

It pleased the old man immensely that for a week after Jim had expressed a desire to be married, the young man stuck diligently to his books, made out the routine papers, and discussed minor cases with clients with as much industry as if romance were not possible to his nature. Not a word had been said about matrimony, and things went on, therefore, as usual until one day, toward the close of business hours, old John called young Jim into the private office and said:

"James"—it was always James when formal business was at hand, and always Jim when the father was either affectionate or irritated—"James, you have been now more than two years out of college, and during that time you have done pretty well in this business. You might have done a heap sight better in college if your idiotic father hadn't given you so much money to spend. However, you got your sheepskin and you know my sentiments on that matter. You haven't done half badly here and I've made up my mind to promote you. Understand, James, you are at liberty to withdraw now and become anything you choose. Do you want to be an actor?"



"No, Governor," replied Jim, "I can't act."

"I thought so when I saw your tomfoolery in the amateur performance last winter. Want to be a literary man, or an artist, or an amateur photographer?"

"No, Governor, I want to be a lawyer."

"Good on your head! I always believed somehow or other in your horse sense. Now listen, James, this is the last place where the roads divide. There ain't any more turns. You're like a nun that has served her novitate. From this day you either remain in the world, a clerk in my office if you like, or you become a lawyer. You choose to take the veil, eh? All right. You are a lawyer. You've been admitted to the bar. Now I make you my partner; the first,

and God grant, the only one I shall ever associate with. Sit still, you young scamp! No thanks! You've earned your rights; but you don't suppose, do you, that you're going to become an equal partner all at once? Not much. When your talent and experience bring as much to the business as mine do, you share even and not till then. Meantime, I'll show you how you can get on."

Thereupon old Pendragon went into an explanation of an elaborate plan whereby Jim, if he should prove able and faithful, would increase his annual income from a very modest beginning to an amount that would serve handsomely for any reasonable man. Old John took pains, while saying nothing of matrimony, to impress it upon Jim's mind that it would be many years at the best before he could reasonably think of taking a wife. And James Pendragon, son of his father, held his peace and bided his time, all the while determined to outwit the old gentleman at the earliest opportunity.

"And, by the way, Jim," said old John when all the arrangements had been concluded, "in your partial capacity of office manager I suggest that you improve the clerical force. I can't look after them in detail, but there are certainly some careless people in our employ. That typewriter, for instance, made me spend a solid hour correcting her errors in the transcription of a complaint the other day. That's only an instance, mind, and if you can improve the service of the office, go ahead and do it."

Jim left the office that afternoon deeply impressed with the change in his relation to business and life in general. Far into the night he lay awake thinking, giving a considerable share of attention to the immediate needs of the Wall street office, and a good deal more to methods and schemes that might accelerate his own progress and conduce to the desired development of the romance that glowed in his heart. All this made him unusually grave the next day.

All the rest of the day Jim worked furiously, but that he was half conscious of a new thought was shown by the amused smile that flickered across his face every few minutes. He left the office a little earlier than usual and went to one of the several schools of typewriting that flourish in New York; institutions where young women learn to be operators and pay for their tuition out of the wages they receive for an

unknown time after they have secured employment. Young Pendragon asked many questions about the cost of learning to use the machine, the time required to acquire proficiency, and the like; and before he left he had made a provisional arrangement for a special pupil who was to be favored with all manner of careful attention, to the end that her progress might be as rapid as possible. Then he went home with a bounding heart, and that amused smile never left his face.

In the evening he went directly to a pretentious looking house up-town. The elaborate engraving upon the door-plate reduced to plain type, was:

INGALLS.

Miss Ingalls was at home—Jim knew she would be—and between them there ensued an interview which proved to be of the utmost importance to the young man and without

which this story might have been impossible. Just what the conversation was need not be stated; in fact, I could not repeat the phrases if I would; but it doesn't matter, as the results are the only thing that concern us. Jim came down the steps late in the evening, a smile still upon his face, a little more set and determined perhaps than before, but yet a smile; and his step was as firm and his pace as rapid before. During the next several days there were as many different types employed in the Pendragons' office.

None of them succeeding in suiting the capricious fancy of the younger partner; but not one left his employment before he had secured an opportunity for her elsewhere. With each change there ensued brief communications between the mistress of the "school" and young Pendragon, a wonderful boy in the latter's office acting as the bearer of despatches. The frequency of these errands disturbed the serenity of this boy's reflections, but he could make nothing out of them.

"I don't see wot's got into Jim," he confided to his next superior, a minor clerk who dreamed that some day he would read law; "all de girls up to de school an' de woman wot runs

it is gittin' on to me. W'en dey sees me come in with a note from Jim, dey grins an' seem to be askin' 'who next?' It makes me blush, it does, an' I don't like it."

The office boy was not the only one who observed and commented upon the many changes at the writing machine.

"Say, Jim," exclaimed old John Pendragon, bursting into his son's room one morning, "if this procession is going to keep up much longer I wish you'd catalogue 'em, or stick tags on 'em, or something of that kind so that I can know what to call 'em. Why not number the girls, eh? Blessed if I didn't come near mistaking your latest for a client!"

Young Pendragon leaned back in his chair just after the manner of his father when serious matters were under discussion, and replied gravely:

"It must be something of a nuisance, Governor; I feel it myself, and for that very reason I am anxious to get a typewriter who can be depended on to stay, one who will be perfectly satisfactory. We'll hit on it very soon, I think. I have a young lady in view whose services can be obtained before long, and I am pretty sure she will suit."

"Oh, it's all right, Jim, of course it's all right," said old John good-humoredly; "I don't know what's been the matter with all the others; but you have to see their work more than I do, so I s'pose you know. Meantime, what's this one's name?"

"Jones."

"Miss, I s'pose? All right. I'll go and get acquainted with Miss Jones, and as soon as we begin to understand each other and know each other by sight, we will make our bow to Miss Smith and say good-bye to Miss Jones, eh?"

Jim smiled, but made no reply, and his father returned to his own room. The young lady in question was sitting patiently by his desk where he had left her, her fingers resting lightly on the keyboard of her machine. It was as if she were afraid of losing valuable time by any delay in the movement of her hands.

"Are you familiar with the terminology of law, Miss Jones?" inquired old Pendragon, solemnly.



Miss Jones almost gasped. It was her first interview with this stern, big-voiced man, and she was frightened.

"I—I do not know, sir," she responded, timidly; "I am afraid not, though in the school we had to copy legal papers so that we might learn to write for lawyers."

"Is this your first regular employment?"

"Yes, sir." Miss Jones' voice was almost inaudible. She was all of a quiver, and she clasped her hands nervously. Old John remarked her trepidation under his beetling brows, and mentally he called himself a fool for bothering the girl. He had never before asked such questions, and they would not have been suggested on this occasion but for his bantering conversation with Jim.

"Well, Miss Jones," he exclaimed cheerily, "don't be uneasy on that account. I'm not wholly a bear, and I hope to see you get on splendidly."

Miss Jones winked back her threatening tears, and bending her head low over the keyboard proceeded to rattle off several letters with commendable rapidity, not infrequently pausing while Mr. Pendragon collected his ideas for a new sentence. When the task was done the old lawyer looked over the work, found it free from serious error, and was impelled to encourage Miss Jones by expressing his satisfaction; but he did not act on the impulse. Miss Jones had retired to the main office, and old John thought how unwise it would be for him to encourage her when the permanency of her employment really depended upon his son.

"She'll probably go, like the rest of 'em, at the end of a week," said old John to himself, and after that he thought no more about the matter.

Another week began, however, and Miss Jones had not been dismissed. The sagacious office boy eyed her sharply during the morning, until she was summoned to "take" letters for young Pendragon. Then he remarked to his confidant:

"I was waitin' all t'rough Sat'day fer Jim to send me up to de school to get a new girl. But he forgot it."

"Why, what's the matter with Jonesy?" inquired the ambitious clerk.

"Nothing that I know of," replied the boy; "but wot ailed all de others, I'd like to know? Oh, Jonesy 'll have to go, you hear me talk!"

Another week slipped by, and to the boy's unutterable astonishment Miss Jones did not receive her dismissal. It worried him a good deal to see his reputation as a prophet endangered, but he admitted that it would give him great relief if he could but feel certain that he would not again have to face the young women at the school. It occurred to the senior partner, too, that an unusual period had elapsed since he had had to familiarize himself with the appearance and methods of a new typewriter.

"Getting on well, Miss Jones?" he asked suddenly one day during the third week of her employment.

"I hope so, sir," she replied, looking up in surprise.

"Well, don't you know whether you are or not?" thundered old John.

Miss Jones smiled roguishly. She had learned something about the harmlessness of Pendragon senior's bark.



"I think you should know more about that than I, sir," she said.

"Don't know the first thing about it," retorted John, sharply. "Can't you see that my son runs this office so far as routine details go? He employed you, and he's got to be satisfied. I've no fault to find, not a bit, and I don't want to alarm you, Miss Jones, but my son James is—ah—exceedingly particular. When you suit him you can say you're doing well."

"Mr. James has not found any fault with me yet, sir," said Miss Jones, blushing like a rose and looking down at her hands.

"Glad of it," commended John, and forthwith they resumed work.

Miss Jones had been with the Pendragons about a month when there came one of those days that carry irritability in the atmosphere. Everybody in the office, excepting possibly Miss Jones, was affected by it. And it happened as it always does on such days, that there was a vast amount of important work on hand. The head clerk directed his wrath at the office boy, young Pendragon spoke sharply to the ambitious under-clerk, old John stormed in and out of his room

thundering at everybody, and in the absence of the partners the clerks and students complained to each other, and growling was general. Miss Jones was silent through the storm, copying away for dear life upon a long series of verbose documents that were wanted in a hurry. Her lips were tightly set together, her pretty brows contracted in the intensity of her exertion, and the keys rattled like a miniature spinning mill. Presently old John stamped out of his room.

"Got that answer ready?" he demanded roughly.

Miss Jones' cheek paled. The best operator in the world could not have finished the task within an hour later.

"No, sir," she responded in a low voice, keeping hard at her work.

"Humph!" growled the lawyer discontentedly, as he stamped back and slammed his door.

A half hour passed with various demonstrations of the mental storm in the general office. Miss Jones suddenly



stopped and looked blankly at the document that she was copying. She

read the long, involved sentence before her three or four times over; what could be the matter with it? She looked back at the title of the case; then she hastily read a certain section in the complaint, and her hands trembled so that the leaves rattled. Could it

be that either of the Pendragons had made an error? that a word had been inserted that absolutely nullified the intent and effect of the agreement? What should she do? Was it her business to question the correctness of her employer's language? And on such a day?

Once more she scanned the critical sentence, took her resolution quickly, and carried the document into John Pendragon's room. The old lawyer looked up from his desk where he was deep in a discussion with a client.

"Got that ready?" he asked sharply.

"No, sir," replied Miss Jones, and it seemed to her as if her voice came from somewhere on the other side of the world.

"Well, what is it?" exclaimed the lawyer before she could go on.

"I am so afraid, Mr. Pendragon," fluttered Miss Jones, "that there is a mistake here that—"

"Mistake!" old John's voice was a terrifying roar; "Mistake! good gracious, young woman, what do you mean? what do you know about law? what—what—here, let me see the thing."

Trembling from head to foot and utterly unable to speak, Miss Jones laid down the document and pointed to the suspicious word. The lawyer growled inarticulately as he studied the page.

"Thunder and guns!" he exclaimed suddenly; "Who the—what—how—ugh!" and he seized a pencil and drew a heavy line through the fatal word. "Hurry up, now," he added as harshly as before, and Miss Jones withdrew, leaving him in a state of continual explosion from which came strange remarks about Sam Hill, Lord Harry, thunder, and other terrible things. When she resumed her work, her agitation was so great that she could hardly strike the keys, and though that wore away after a few moments, she could not make up her mind whether she had done right or not in calling Mr. Pendragon's attention to the error. The copying completed she took the documents to the old lawyer who received them without a word, and at the close of that trying day Miss Jones was still in doubt concerning the wisdom of her course.

Next day John summoned Jim into his presence.

"James," said he, with a hesitancy unusual with him, "how do you like Miss Jones? I mean, how does she get on?"

James had with difficulty suppressed a start of surprise, but he answered gravely: "I find her a very satisfactory operator."

"Ah!" continued John much relieved; "I'm glad to hear it. She's certainly a very extraordinary young woman, and I hope we shall be able to keep her. She really performed a very valuable little service yesterday in detecting an error in our answer. So different from the ordinary operator. Most of 'em work right on, putting down letters with no more idea of the meaning than as if 'twas Greek. And, I say, James, I wouldn't have spoken of it so earnestly, but I was in a tantrum all day yesterday, and I'm afraid I hurt her feelings. Of course I shall tell her that I appreciate her

cleverness, but I thought you might tell her that I'm not such a confounded curmudgeon as I am."

Young Pendragon smiled, and replied that he would try to see that the young lady should not be unduly disturbed, and as he left the room he nearly burst out laughing. He preserved his gravity, however, and when he had reached his desk he pressed a button that brought the sapient office boy before him.

"Ask Miss Jones to step in, please," said Jim. A moment later Miss Jones entered, and after she had closed the door, this extraordinary dialogue ensued;

Young Pendragon: "Lucy, the—"

Miss Jones (*startled*): "Oh! oh! you musn't!"

Young Pendragon: "I know, but I couldn't help it this time. Keep your distance, but listen! The governor is all cut up because he spoke harshly to you yesterday. He's going to apologize, but he wants me to say that he means it."

Miss Jones: "Oh, don't let him apologize! What shall I say to him?"

Young Pendragon: "It doesn't matter. Needn't say anything. Now, Miss Jones, please make three copies of this complaint."

Old John made his amends to the typewriter, awkwardly but honestly, and he was not a little surprised and embarrassed when Miss Jones stammered something and began to cry.

"There, there!" he exclaimed, "you mustn't feel so about it. It'll happen again likelier than not, and next time you won't mind it. Confound it, go and talk to my son about it."

This command Miss Jones obeyed dutifully, but not immediately. She clattered away at her machine all day long, and the keys responding to legal verbiage seemed to be singing love songs to her. No; she attended strictly to business in the office, and did not talk to Jim about the episode until he called upon her during the evening.

Not long thereafter the ambitious clerk remarked to the office boy:

"Jim's rather sweet on Jonesy, aint he?"

"Oh, is he? How long since? Think I aint got no eyes? But it don't amount to anything."

"How do you know?" inquired the clerk, who had an ill-disguised respect for the perception of his junior associate.

"'Cause he's engaged to a girl named Ingalls. I used to

take bokays of flowers to her from him every day he got paid off. Ain't had that job for more'n a month, and I'm glad of it. Pr'a'ps they're married now Jim's a partner."

Now it so happened that the elder Pendragon overheard the office boy's last remarks, and the result was a summons for Jim.

"James," he said with awful gravity, "you remember my views regarding your getting married?"

"I do, sir," replied Jim, with corresponding solemnity.

"Well?" cried the old man, after a pause.

"I've nothing more to say on that subject just at present, Governor," said Jim smiling, and that ended the conversation for the moment.

Old John was puzzled, irritated at his son's reticence and self-possession.

"Is the young scamp trying to outwit me someway?" he thought. Then he called the young man in again.

"James," he said, "are you married?"

At this Jim laughed heartily.

"On my word, Governor," he replied sobering, "I am not married."

"All right, all right," returned John, trying to conceal his relief under a show of temper; "see that you don't make a fool of yourself."

Young men should be exceedingly discreet in conducting their love affairs, especially when there is a stern parent in the way, and the necessities of business keep all three parties

in the same office. Matters had drifted along as usual for perhaps a week when young Pendragon so far forgot discretion as to caress Miss Jones' curly head gently as she sat at his side "taking" dictation; and as luck would have it, old Pendragon entered the room just at that moment. Whatever the senior partner came to say is unknown to the narrator; what he did say, in a tone as cold and level as a sheet of ice, was:

"James, I want to see you a moment."

He shut the door softly and walked slowly to his own room. Jim and the typewriter looked blankly at each other a moment. Then Jim rose and said :

"Come, Lucy ; we must face the music, and it's just as well now as later."

So they went together to old Pendragon's private office. The senior partner scowled angrily at Miss Jones.

"James," he said, "I asked to see you, not Miss Jones. I was going to tell you to find a new typewriter at once."

"I expected that that would be your command, sir, and if you insist, I will discharge Miss Jones now. That, however, will make no difference in my relations to her. We are engaged to be married."

"Wha— wha— Nonsense !" roared old John. Then, in a tone of exceeding bitterness ; "so you've thought to trick your father, have you ? tried to get me interested in your sweetheart, have you, by introducing her into my office so that she might make a fool of me ! Oh, Jim ! I didn't think you'd do that !"

"And I haven't done that," said Jim. "I never had seen Miss Jones before she came to this office as an employee."

The old lawyer's eyes bulged in astonished incredulity.

"Isn't your name Ingalls ?" he gasped, addressing the typewriter.

"No, sir," she replied, scared half to death.

"What is it, then ?"

"Lucy Jones, sir."

"The fact is, Governor," said Jim, "I did have an idea of getting Miss Ingalls to learn the machine and come in here under an assumed name, but when I suggested it to her she scorned the idea of taking up such menial occupation for any purpose. In short, she herself brought about my disillusion in that direction, and we have not met since. You were right in saying that my fancy there was folly. In this instance I know better, but I have not intended to be rash. Lucy and I are not disposed to get married after an acquaintance of two months, but we do love each other, and if we continue to, we shall get married some day."

"Please, Mr. Pendragon," added Lucy, when that gentleman could find no words to express himself, "I am very sorry if I have offended you. I didn't mean to ; I— Jim—I just couldn't help it !"

Old John grunted.

"Can you make bread?" he demanded, gruffly.

"Oh, yes indeed," answered Lucy, brightening; "I can do everything needful about a house. I was brought up to at home, where I did all the work, and I learned the typewriter just because—because I hadn't any home left to do the work in."

John grunted again, this time rather gently. Lucy had hidden her face against Jim's shoulder to conceal her tears, and Jim looked first tenderly at her, and then with a quiet steadfastness at his father.

"Thunderation!" roared the latter after a moment; "what am I to do for an expert typewriter after you're married?"

"Why, sir," replied Lucy, raising her head and smiling through her tears; "you can have me if you want me! as long as Jim doesn't make very much money we intend to work right along here together, and I would want to work where he is always, don't you see?"

There is surely no need of detailing this scene further. Of course old John Pendragon behaved properly, and when the marriage took place there was not lacking a certain piece of paper with his name at the bottom that testified better than anything else could how harmless was the old man's bark, and how true his heart.

"I never would have supposed the Governor would be so liberal," said Jim Pendragon to me when he was relating his share in the incident that made up his romance.

ETCHING: ON THE BAR

BY FRANCIS CHURCHILL WILLIAMS

The story of a shipwreck. Written for Short Stories—Copyrighted.

The schooner rushes shoreward, buried to her lee rail in a smother of foam and flying spume. A piece of the tattered stay-sail torn from the bolt ropes drifts to leeward out of sight. The blurred figure of a man struggles desperately with the wheel-spokes aft.

Amid-ships, a huddled group of sailors cling to the stanchions, and just behind them is the figure of a man who holds in one arm a bundle. The other arm is wound about a woman and the lashing which is fastened to the mainmast.

There is a sudden lifting of the schooner's bows. An instant's pause, then a shock that brings them to their knees. Another moment and a huge wave rears its white-bearded head and sends the schooner staggering broadside to her doom.

Then minutes, almost hours, while the massive seas thunder against the vessel's planks, and sometimes sweeping over her deck, go hissing and leaping on again toward the faint line which marks the beach.

Then comes a flash from the beach—a brilliant arc of light, painted for the instant against a black shield, and there is the sharp smack of a line falling across the deck. Men make their way toward the place, and, after desperate exertions, a hawser stretches from the maze of rigging into the darkness toward the shore.

Soon out from the obscurity develops a gray shape, which comes to the vessel's side. Then the life-buoy, bearing a woman who clutches a baby to her breast, is shut from sight by the black curtain. Again and again the gray shape returns, until only one man is left on the deck—the tall figure of the captain, who stands watching the shore, his hand grasping a stay, and the wind and spray whipping his face.

A dog crawls from the companion-way and takes its place beside the man upon the deck-house roof. Then a huge wave towers its height above the schooner's rail, the man's figure is lost to sight, and the dog's long whimpering howl is drowned in the crash of the water's fall upon the deck.

A TALE OF TWO CITIES

BY WILL LISENBEE

A clever and original story of Western life and character. Written for Short Stories—Copyrighted.

For some time Badgertown had entertained the most perverse antagonism toward Alkali City, and, on the other hand, Alkali City had looked upon Badgertown with the supremest contempt.

Each town regarded the other as a trespasser and a menace to the prosperity of Cactus County—and each claimed the sovereign right to become the county seat when the new county should be organized.

So matters had gone on, and as the great fleet of "prairie schooners" had drifted westward, and began to swell the population of Cactus County, the breach between the rival municipalities visibly widened and the spirit of antagonism swelled into an audible murmur.

"Jist ter think," exclaimed Nathan Skidmore, the mayor of Alkali City, "uv a town uv only seventy-four inhabitants claimin' the right ter the county seat over a city uv nearly a hundred population! Hit's pre-posterous!"

"Hit's outrageous, an' desarves the contempt uv every intelligent squatter on Coyote Prairie," observed Bill Baron-doller, a muscular six-footer from Missouri, who had cast his fortunes with Alkali City. "Seems ter me," he went on, "that hit's nothin' better 'an a confidence game ter git strangers ter stop in Badgertown. Thar ain't nothin' thar ter meck a town 'cept a few buff'lo wallers, the third day ager, an' a lot uv the biggest liars that ever laid out a town! W'y," he continued, getting warmed up with the subject, "the mayor uv Badgertown has had the gall ter actually *ask* strangers ter come thar an' meck thar homes. Had a circular printed, which sez that the town is on the eve uv a great boom—finest location on Coyote Prairy—rich soil—fine water—Italyon climant, an' the *only live* city in Cactus County! Blame take the onery cuss! 'Hain't Alkali City in Cactus County? Hang my looks if it ain't a downright insult ter—"

"Bill," interrupted the mayor, removing the cob pipe from

his mouth, and fixing a look of incredulity upon the speaker, "ken ye produce that circular?"

"Hyar it is," responded Barondoller, drawing a greasy, well-worn document from his pocket, and handing it to the mayor.

Nathan Skidmore took the paper and read it through with a thoughtful countenance.

"I'll be hanged!" he broke forth, "if it hain't enough ter send every cuss in Badgertown ter the pen'tentiary—hit jist is—er I'm a liar an' don't know my own name!" and he shook his fist in the direction of the despised city.

"That's jist what I was thinkin'," urged Barondoller, "an' thar orter be somethin' done ter stop this blamed lyin' an' larn Badgertown that she can't fool with Alkali City without hearin' somethin' drap!"

"The correct thing ter do accordin' ter *my* judgment," pursued the mayor, "is ter call a meetin' uv the Board uv Trade uv Alkali City an' provide measures fer the abatement uv public noosances, an' I think—"

"Badgertown would come under that head," broke in Barondoller.

"Egzactly!" and the mayor performed a series of approving nods.

A silence fell between the two men, broken only by the sound of the summer wind as it swept through the long grass, and stole with a subdued "swish" about the rude shanty by whose door the two men were sitting in the gray twilight.

Before them lay a level stretch of prairie, dotted with a score of rough wooden structures, with here and there a tent or a covered wagon to break the monotony, while beyond the limits of the town a small herd of cattle and ponies were quietly feeding in the high grass. Further back lay a wide stretch of rolling plain, and beyond this—along the rim of the horizon, ran a low chain of timbered hills, behind whose purple fringe the sun had just gone down, and was throwing a flood of yellow light upward through banks of rifted clouds.

The barking of a coyote came from across the swell, and a night bird shot by with a "whish" of rapid wings across the darkening prairie.

"Nathan," said Barondoller, breaking the silence, "by what method would ye perpose ter settle the difficulty—?"

"This," and Nathan Skidmore tapped a six-shooter that hung at his side.

Barondoller nodded his approval of the mayor's "method," and the two separated for the night, Barondoller going to his cabin, a short distance away.

The next day at an early hour, a meeting of the Alkali City "Board of Trade," was called, and its members assembled in Bill Barondoller's cabin.

The mayor was the first to address the meeting.

"Feller citizens an' members uv the Board uv Trade," he began, "we hev met fer the consideration uv a question which is uv the most vital importance ter every citizen uv Alkali City. Badgertown, it seems, hev issued a circular which reflects on the good name uv this city, an' as I am honored by bein' the chief magistrate uv the same, I feel that in justice ter myself an' worthy feller citizens, that some action should be taken at once ter vindicate ourselves in the eyes uv the world an' the intelligent squatters uv Cactus County."

"Hurrah fer the mayor! Hanged if he ain't on the right track!" came from the crowd.

"How this shall be accomplished," continued the official, when the enthusiasm had subsided, "I leave fer yer own consideration, trustin' that yer sense uv justice an' spirit uv patriotic pride will suggest the proper measures fer the speedy vindication uv our fair city, an' the administration uv such a rebuke ter our vile defamers, that will ever meck us worthy uv the name of founders uv a city whose prosperity an' business enterprise hev dazzled the pilgrims from the East, an' made Alkali City a fixed star uv modern civilization!"

This eloquence was followed by a burst of applause that shook the cabin, and the warmest expressions of approval came from the crowd.

"He'll be the meckin' uv Alkali City," declared one of the settlers to Bill Barondoller.

"That's whatever! Hanged if he ain't a reg'lar Dan'l Webster fer meckin' a speech," was the reply.

"I can't meck no speech," said Jim Budlow, "but I'm hyar ter say that I endorse every word our honorable mayor hev sed, an' I think we orter form ourselves inter an investigatin' committy an' ride over ter Badgertown, an' if they don't 'pologize an' meck amends fer their conduct, meck an example out uv 'em!"

"My idy, egzactly!" chimed in Bill Barondoller, and this

opinion was speedily ratified by the entire crowd. Then the meeting adjourned.

A half hour later a delegation of armed and mounted men, headed by the mayor, left Alkali City and galloped swiftly toward Badgertown.

"Boys," said Barondoller, "if they don't do the square thing—"

"Fix 'em so they'll wish they had !" broke in Joe Budlow, jerking his hand in the direction of a heavy six-shooter that protruded from under his loose coat.

"Ye aire ter do nothin without orders from me," said the mayor in a voice of command. "I'm the commander uv this company, an' I'll give the right orders at the right time."

A half hour later the party galloped into Badgertown, and dismounting, they hitched their panting animals to some posts that stood along the principal "street."

A cluster of miserable little shanties scattered about the wind-swept prairie were all the indications of a town to be seen. In front of one of the shanties a little crowd of men were collected, conversing in low tones.

The men from Alkali City approached. The mayor was the first to speak. Stepping to the front of the crowd, he said :

"Gentlemen uv Badgertown, ye see before ye a committy uv citizens uv Alkali City, appointed by the Board uv Trade ter investigate the liein' an' sland'rous stories ye have been circulatin' regardin' our city, an' ter ask ye ter 'pologize in a fittin' manner er suffer the consequences—which means that we intend ter tear down this dilapidated chicken ranch, scatter its rickety hen-roosts ter the four winds, an' administer sich chastisement ter the defamers uv our city as will sarve as a lastin' warnin' ter all like offenders in the future ! Bring out yer mayor an' council that we may feast our eyes on the biggest liars that ever issued a real estate circular or laid out a town—"

The sound of a woman weeping bitterly came from within the building, and the mayor paused and cast a questioning glance at the men before him.

"Hit's the mayor of Badgertown in thar," said one of the men, nodding toward the shanty. "He was throwed from his hoss and killed this mornin'."

The men from Alkali City exchanged swift glances, but

none of them spoke. One of the strangers standing near by now turned to the man nearest him and said :

"It'll be hard on his pore wife an' children. They hain't got hardly nothin' ter live on, I reckon."

"Nope," was the answer. "Never had very much, any way, an' now I 'low they'll have a tough time gettin' along."

"Yes, an' that rale estate agent that came hyar an' got nearly all our money fer boomin' the town—jist got out a circular full o' lies, then run away, so we hain't got much ter help the pore family with."

There was a changed expression on the faces of the men from Alkali City as they withdrew a few yards, and began to discuss the turn affairs had taken.

Meantime, Abe Horner, the marshal of Badgertown, had gathered a little crowd of citizens about him, and was talking earnestly.

"Boys," he said, "I hain't got much ter give, but I'm goin' ter give all I can ter help the pore widder an' family uv little children, an' I know ye'll do the same."

"You can count us all in on that," was the reply.

The marshal took off his hat, and dropping several pieces of silver into it, proceeded to make a financial tour through the crowd, and for some time the clinking of falling coin was the only sound that broke the stillness.

While this was going on the chief of Alkali City and his followers were conversing in low tones.

"From all appearances," said the mayor, "I—I reckon we hev—"

"Made blasted fools outen ourselves !" finished Bill Barondoller.

"That's whatever !" agreed the mayor with an emphatic nod of the head; "but we ain't the men ter stand back from doin' our dooty, air we ?"

"Not if we know our own names," came from his followers.

"That's the talk," went on the mayor, "I see that them fellers over thar air gittin' up a little puss fer the pore family, an' when it comes ter *that* I 'low Alkali City ain't broke, is she, boys ?"

"Not by a jug full !" responded Barondoller, "an' if we can't give more 'an *them* fellers gives, I'm in favor uv us walkin' back ter town an' gittin' our names changed !" and this sentiment was ratified by the entire delegation.

"I'll jist open up the subscription with a few of these," said the mayor, taking off his hat and dropping a handful of silver into it.

His example was followed by all the others, and his hat soon resembled the specie vault of a small saving bank.

"Now," said the magistrate, "we'll see how them other fellers air succeedin,' an' ef we hain't doubled 'em we'll meck another assessment."

With this he approached the crowd of Badgertown citizens, and said :

"Gentlemen, I see ye have been takin' up a little collection fer the pore widder an' children. How much have ye got?"

"'Bout twenty-five dollars," was the reply.

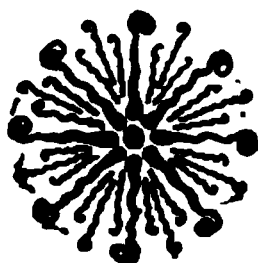
"Wal," answered the mayor, "Alkali City wants ter play in this yere game, an' hyar's her anty—'bout two hundred, I reckon," and he emptied the hat at the feet of the astonished crowd.

Then, without waiting to hear the expressions of gratitude that rose to the lips of the amazed citizens of Badgertown, he turned and walked away. A few moments later the whole Alkali City delegation mounted their horses and galloped out of town, and were soon lost to sight over a swell in the prairie.

For half an hour they rode before a word was spoken. Then the mayor broke the silence :

"Cleaned out!"

"That's whatever!" answered Bill Barondoller.



THE SCARF-PIN

BY WM. MCKENDREE BANGS

This entertaining story describes an unexpected call, and its consequences. Written for Short Stories—Copyrighted. Illustrated by F. T. Richards.

Richard Hayes lay, extended at full length, upon the lounge in the room he had chosen to call his library. Upon the floor were scattered the newspapers he had thrown there carelessly as he had finished reading them. They had occupied his attention for some time—there were many of them; but now with his hands behind his head he was staring at nothing. Presently he rose, and walking toward the fire-place, looked for a minute or so at the generous open fire burning there. He acted as a very lazy man might have; but he was tall and muscular and spare as only a man so near middle age would have been who had lived an active life. But he was very much bored. He walked slowly to the window and looked out upon the quiet street.

"Phew!" he said to himself as he finished a yawn. "Where could one find a sleepier place than this? Or less to do? If I had overwrought me out temper, I dare say the hot be good for me; but as it is—"

He turned impatiently from the window and sat down before the fire. He struck the coals with the poker almost angrily.

"I suppose," he continued to himself after a few minutes, "I suppose this is only a part of the tribute a do-nothing bachelor with no object in life must pay for his liberty. But I never wanted liberty. If Helen—"

He stopped abruptly as though the subject in his mind was one on which he would not permit himself to speak even to himself; but in spite of himself, however, his thoughts ran on in the same direction. He remembered that he had not found the city where his mother lived, and where their home had

always been, so dull in his younger years; and he remembered that it had seemed a paradise when he loved Helen and thought that she loved him. But all that was so long ago, and it was long ago, too, that he had found, as he thought, evidence that her love was for another. He grew presently angry that he had permitted himself to recall unpleasant or unhappy memories, and then he flung himself down upon his lounge again and tried to forget the past in sleep; but there was a noise in the hall without, and he heard the maid directing someone toward his door. He was one of the least patient of men, and he said aloud, as he arose:

"Confound that girl! I ought to kill her!"

"Yes, do please. It would be so pleasant and diverting," a lady said, who entered in time to overhear him. She said this calmly, but she really was embarrassed by the unexpected meeting and his words. (To his astonishment he saw at once that the intruder was Miss Warren.) He saw, too, that she was handsomer than ever, and a little more stately; but he did not see, as a woman would have seen, that her gown, if not quite shabby, was no longer in its first youth. He thought himself equal to any situation; but now he was ill at ease, and he felt a disturbing consciousness that his face was very red as they stood facing each other in silence.

"But where is Mrs. Hayes?" Miss Warren asked at length, regaining her composure. "The maid told me I should find her here. And—and I ought not to intrude upon you."

"The maid is stupid. Yes, it is a way she has," Hayes replied. "But I beg that you won't think of yourself as an intruder. Pray sit down," he continued as he offered her a chair. "You will find it more comfortable here than anywhere else, and mother will be home soon, I am sure. You have changed very little in all these years," he went on.

"Hush! They are not so very many," she replied, as she raised her hands with a little gesture of protest.

"Do the little vanities last forever, Helen?"

"But, Richard," she cried, "that is not a little vanity. We are not old people yet; at least, I am not. Do I look so very old?" she asked, in a half serious way.

"No; I don't think you do," he said slowly as he looked at her, a great pretense of care in his manner. "You always did care mightily for appearances, I remember."

"I did, and I do. I could be very eloquent in defence of a care for them. Have you never been governed in some important matter by appearances alone?"

"I?" he asked as he looked at her closely. Then without replying further to her question he went on, "But sit down and tell me all that has happened to you during all these ——."

"Years?" she interrupted. "You are determined to think them so many then?"

With willful persistence he reminded her of the year it was in which he had gone to the war, and of the many years which had passed since then. It was, indeed, a long time since they had seen each other.

"I am convinced," she said, as he paused. "But why did you want to convince me? Never mind, though, and never mind what has happened to me. I should so like to hear about yourself." Then, as if repenting of the warmth with which she had said this, she asked in an important tone.

"But where is your mother?"

Hayes looked at her keenly, and smiled a little quizzically. He could remember, easily enough, a time when, even though she did not love him, she yet was not unwilling to be alone with him.

"Please do not worry," he said simply. "She will not be long now," he added, as he looked at his watch.

"But I came to see her on business, and I ought not to be wasting time."

"Wasting time?" he asked her. "Whose, then? Is yours so valuable?"

"Certainly it is."

"Indeed! I envy you. Mine is not."

"Oh, but it ought to be, Captain Hayes."

"I will admit," he returned, "there can be no question of that."

"It makes me so angry," she went on, impetuously, "to hear any one speak so of time when there is so much to be done in the world. And you thought as I do, in the old days, Richard."

It pleased Hayes to learn that she remembered what his views had been so long ago, and he hoped that she would continue, although there was some reproach in her voice and manner that he had lost his youthful enthusiasm in any

measure. She was silent, however, and, at length he said:

"You won't mind if I change the subject? You know my letters from home have been rather intermittent, so to speak. Are you as you used to be?"

And Richard Hayes as he spoke came unpleasantly near to blushing again.

"As I used to be?" Helen asked in genuine wonder.

"Are you Miss Warren yet?" Hayes asked in an explosive way, as though he found it hard to ask the question, but yet was determined to know the truth, whatever it might be.

"Certainly, yes," Helen answered, and a very certain blush covered her face. "Why need you ask? I rather like my name, and I don't know that I could have bettered it any by changing it."

"I had no wish to be indiscreet," he said as she paused; "but I understood that you were about to be married when I went away."

"Oh, yes," she answered, not altogether successfully hiding a sigh. "So many people understood that I was to be married to Mr. Archer, but it was all a mistake. I ought not to trouble you too much with my affairs; but perhaps it is well that you should know, that is, if you want to."

Hayes was unmistakably very much moved. He rose from his chair and for a minute or two he walked to and fro. But the sadness in her voice struck him and he looked at her sharply. He wondered if Archer had behaved badly to her.

"You must not speak of it, if it hurts you," he said.

"It does not hurt—much," she answered impulsively. "It ought not to hurt at all, now. I thought that there would be no one more to tell—but we are such old friends, you and I. Neither was to blame. I wonder that your mother did not write to you about it."

"I missed a lot of letters," Hayes replied angrily; "and very important ones, some of them, too. I am very glad to have you confide in me."

"Oh, I am not at all confidential," she returned. He smiled a little grimly as he felt that he had been rebuffed and rebuked; but she continued at once. "Everyone who cares knows all about it."

"All right, of course; but I am sorry that you should have had to open any old wounds."

"Thank you!" she responded simply; but she did not

persist in her attempt at explanation. Almost suddenly, as it seemed to Hayes, she turned to him and said: "But you're going away? Tell me about that. Do you know how strange it seemed to me—to all of us—" she corrected herself quickly. "It was so sudden and unexpected. No one even knew that you meant to go. You were one of us and then you were not. It was very sad, really it was. Why did you go so suddenly?"

"Love of adventure if you like," he answered, carelessly. "And patriotism was a very saving virtue just then, too. But tell me," he went on as though he wished to talk no longer of himself, "this business. You know that now my mother will leave all such matters to me. Don't let me urge you; but if I can be of any service to you I hope you will command me."

"You are very kind," Helen returned; but really I do not think I ought to trouble you in the matter. Yet I am afraid that if I don't tell you, you will think it a much more serious matter than it is."

"Pray, don't put it in that way," he said. "I am not curious, and I will promise to think of it as you would like to have me."

"Well," she responded, "it is only that I wanted your mother to help me to sell some jewelry I have no use for. The money would be of more use to us than this jewelry we can't wear can be."

"My experience in that line is rather limited, Helen; but I daresay there is some easily found way to do that sort of thing. What is there of the jewelry?"

"Oh, some rings—I hardly suppose that altogether they can be very valuable,—and other things, and a scarf-pin. We were richer when they were bought."

"Yes," Hayes replied, musingly. "I know there has been a change. Perhaps you had better let me send for them."

"The scarf-pin I have with me," Miss Warren said, and without more ado she handed it to him. He weighed it in his hand, scarcely looking at it after the first quick glance.

"I might have known," he said.

"Might have known," she repeated. "Why? I do not understand. Surely you have never seen it before?"

"Yes," he answered, "I have seen it before. I remem-

ber that pin better than any bit of jewelry in the world, and I have seen many a famous gem, too."

"You make me very curious," Miss Warren returned. "I wish you would explain. Why should you remember it? It certainly is not extraordinary; at least," she added, "I never knew that it was."

Hayes pulled himself together, but the effort it cost him was evident enough. Then he tried to speak in his usual manner of careless indifference.

"Perhaps," he said, "I should not remember it. It is a good many years ago that I saw it last;—but I forget,—you do not want me to speak of many years at once."

"Pray forget the number of years," Miss Warren said impatiently, "and tell me when you saw it last."

"I have seen it twice before; indeed, I saw you buy it. Then I saw it again a day or two before I went away; but my recollections won't enhance its value any. But can you bear to sell it?"

"Bear? Why not, pray?" Miss Warren asked in astonishment, and then continued quickly, "You don't think there is any sentiment about it, do you?"

"Why think when I saw it last," Hayes responded, puzzled in his turn.

"Please don't talk enigmas. Do tell me what you mean."

"As I said, I saw you buy it. I happened that day to want to make a purchase myself," Hayes explained. He spoke quite in the tone and manner of one who had to speak of the most commonplace matter in the world instead of what had been of so great importance to him. "Afterwards," he went on, "I saw it in Archer's scarf, and—that is all."

Helen was pleased. She did not know why; but behind the calm manner of Hayes she saw or felt the evidence of his feeling. She, too, was strongly moved.

"It was that pin that made all the trouble," she went on calmly, and simply enough, however.

"Indeed it was," Hayes responded under his breath; and then continued to her: "Trouble for you, do you mean?"

"Yes," she answered sadly, "and for Harry Archer, too. Poor fellow, it really was pitiful!"

"How was it?" Hayes asked.

"I gave it to him on his birthday. It was an extravagant

gift, maybe," she said slowly; "but he had been very kind to us all just then, and we were such old friends."

"I do not see any trouble in all that," Hayes responded. He was bitterly angry with himself; but yet lighter in heart than he had been for many a day. "Go on," he added, impatiently, for now he felt he could not hear too soon all the explanation she might have to make.

"Somebody told that I had given it to him and that we were engaged. And we never were, and never thought of being."

"How did you get the pin back?" Hayes asked, too impatient to wait for her to tell the story in her own way.

"You must not interrupt me," she said, as she laughed a little. "The story made us both angry, and he gave it back to me. Then someone said he had jilted me, and that was ten times harder to bear; it hurts yet."

Hayes walked to the window, opened it, and flung the pin far into the street.

"Captain Hayes!" Miss Warren began in expostulation.

"That has given me trouble enough," Hayes interrupted. "You asked me why I went to the war so suddenly. That was the reason. That had more to do with sending me away than all the love of adventure, patriotism, love of country, I ever had or ever man could have."

"Richard—" she began again.

"Wait," he said, almost fiercely; "it will be over soon. I, too, thought you were engaged. I heard that you were; and I saw the pin in his scarf and knew that you had given it. Did you not see, did you not know how much I loved you?"

"You never told me—" she began; but again he interrupted her.

"I thought it had all been killed, and that I had buried it; but now——! Look at me, Helen. Do you not see, do you not know how much I love you now?"

She made no pretense of coyness. She took his hand and said to him:

"Richard, it almost broke my heart when you went away."

"And you have loved me all this long time?"

"I would have loved you forever," she answered. He kissed her and took her in his arms.

"But what a faint heart you had?" she said.

"I was so sure," he answered; "but can you ever forgive me? Think of the years of happiness we have lost."

"We will be all the happier now," she responded, "now we know how much we need each other."

"Do you know," Hayes asked, "I thought the pin was being bought for me that day?"

"Oh," she returned in the old mischievous way he remembered and liked so well; "then it was wounded vanity rather than disappointed love that sent you away?"

"Both, my dear, maybe; but think how much of a man is hurt when his vanity is wounded at twenty-four."

"Then does a man's vanity grow less as the years come to him?" she asked.

"I would have said yes, a minute ago; but now that I know you love me and have for so long, I am very vain and proud."



THE CHILD OF URBINO

BY LOUISA DE LA RAMÉ

(OUIDA)

A charming tale of Raffaele's childhood, selected from a collection of stories by this well-known author—under the title of "Bimbi."—J. B. Lippincott Company, publishers.

It was in the year of grace 1490, in the reign of Guidobaldo, Lord of Montefeltro, Duke of Urbino—the year, by the way, of the birth of that most illustrious and gracious lady, Vittoria Colonna.

It was in the spring of the year, in that mountain-eyrie beloved of the Muses and coveted of the Borgia, that a little boy stood looking out of a grated casement into the calm sunshiny day. He was a pretty boy, with hazel eyes, and fair hair cut straight above his brows; he wore a little blue tunic with some embroidery about the throat of it, and had in his hand a little round flat cap of the same color. He was sad of heart this merry morning, for a dear friend of his, a friend ten years older than himself, had gone the night before on a journey over the mountains to Maestro Francesco at Bologna, there to be bound apprentice to that gentle artist. This friend, Timoteo della Vita, had been very dear to the child, had played with him and jested with him, made him toys and told him stories, and he was very full of pain at Timoteo's loss. Yet he told himself not to mind, for had not Timoteo said to him, "I go as goldsmith's prentice to the best of men; but I mean to become a painter!" And the child understood that to be a painter was to be the greatest and wisest the world held; he quite understood that, for he was Raffaele, the seven-year old son of Signor Giovanni Sanzio.

He was a very happy little boy here in this stately yet homely and kindly Urbino, where his people had come for refuge when the lances of Malatesta had ravaged and ruined their homestead. He had the dearest old grandfather in the world; he had a loving mother, and he had a father who was very tender to him, and painted him among the angels of heaven, and was always full of pleasant conceits and

admirable learning, and such true love of art that the child breathed it with every breath, as he could breathe the sweetness of a cowslip-bell when he held one in his hands up to his nostrils.

Can you not picture to yourself good, shrewd, wise Giovanni Sanzio, with his old father by his side, and his little son running before him, in the holy evening time of a feast-day, with the deep church-bells swaying above head, and the last sun-rays smiting the frescoed walls, the stone bastions, the blazoned standard on the castle roof, the steep city rocks shelving down into the greenery of cherry-orchard and of pear-tree? I can, whenever I shut my eyes and recall Urbino as it was; and would it had been mine to live then in that mountain-home, and meet that divine child going along his happy, smiling way, garnering unconsciously in his infant soul all the beautiful sights and sounds around him, to give them in his manhood to the world.

"Let him alone: he will paint all this some day," said his wise father, who loved to think that his brushes and his colors would pass in time to Raffaello, whose hands would be stronger to hold them than his own had been. And, whether he would ever paint it or not, the child never tired of looking from his eyrie on the rocks and counting all that passed below through the blowing corn under the leafy orchard boughs.

There were so many things to see in Urbino in that time, looking so over the vast green valley below: a clump of spears most likely, as men-at-arms rode through the trees; a string of market-folk bringing in the produce of the orchards or the fields; perchance a red-robed cardinal on a white mule with glittering housings, behind him a sumpter train rich with baggage, furniture, gold and silver plate; maybe the duke's hunting-party going out or coming homeward with caracoling steeds, beautiful hounds straining at their leash, hunting-horns sounding merrily over the green country; maybe a band of free lances, with plumes tossing, steel glancing bannerets fluttering against the sky; or maybe a quiet gray-robed string of monks or pilgrims singing the hymn sung before Jerusalem, treading the long lush grass with sandalled feet, coming towards the city, to crowd slowly and gladly up its rocky height. Do you not wish with me you could stand in the window with Raffaello to see the earth as it was then?

No doubt the good folks of Urbino laughed at him often for a little moonstruck dreamer, so many hours did he stand looking, looking—only looking—as eyes have a right to do that see well and not altogether as others see.

Happily for him, the days of his childhood were times of peace, and he did not behold, as his father had done, the torches light up the street and the flames devour the homesteads.

At this time Urbino was growing into fame for its pottery-work : those big dishes and bowls, those marriage-plates and pharmacy-jars which it made, were beginning to rival the products of its neighbor Gubbio, and when its duke wished to send a bridal gift, or a present on other festal occasions, he oftenest chose some service or some rare platter of his own Urbino ware.

There was a master-potter of the Montefeltro at that time, one Maestro Benedetto Ronconi, whose name had not become world-renowned as Orazio Fontane's and Maestro Giorgio's did in the following century, yet who in that day enjoyed the honor of all the duchy, and did things very rare and fine in the Urbino ware. He lived within a stone's throw of Giovanni Sanzio, and was a gray-haired, handsome, somewhat stern and pompous man, now more than middle-aged, who had one beauteous daughter, by name Pacifica. He cherished Pacifica well, but not so well as he cherished the things he made—the deep round nuptial plates and oval massive dishes that he painted with scriptural stories and strange devices, and landscapes such as those he saw around, and flowing scrolls with Latin mottoes in blackletter, and which, when thus painted, he consigned with an anxiously beating heart to the trial of the ovens, and which sometimes came forth from the trial all cracked and blurred and marred, and sometimes emerged in triumph and came into his trembling hands iridescent and lovely with those opaline hues which we admire in them to this day as the especial glory of majolica.

The house of Maestro Benedetto was a long stone building, with a loggia at the back all overclimbed by hardy rose-trees, and looking on a garden that was more than half an orchard, and in which grew abundantly pear-trees, plum-trees, and wood strawberries. The lancet windows of his workshop looked on all this quiet greenery. There were so many such

pleasant workshops then in the land, calm, godly, home-like places, filled from without with song of birds and scent of herbs and blossoms.

The little son of neighbor Sanzio ran in and out this bigger, wider house and garden of Maestro Benedetto at his pleasure, for the maiden Pacifica was always glad to see him, and even the sombre master-potter would unbend to him and show him how to lay the color on the tremulous fugitive unbaked biscuit.

Pacifica was a lovely young woman of some seventeen or eighteen summers; and perhaps Raffaelle was but remembering her when he painted, in his after-years, the face of his Madonna di San Sisto. He loved her as he loved everything that was beautiful and every one who was kind, and almost better than his own beloved father's studio, almost better than his dear old grandsire's cheerful little shop, did he love this grave, silent, sweet-smelling, sun-pierced, shadowy old house of Maestro Benedetto.

Maestro Benedetto had four apprentices or pupils in that time learning to become *figuli*, but the one whom Raffaelle liked the most (and Pacifica too), was one Luca Torelli, of a village above in the mountains,—a youth with a noble, dark, pensive beauty of his own, and a fearless gait, and a supple, tall, slender figure that would have looked well in the light coat of mail and silken doublet of a man-at-arms. In sooth, the spirit of Messer Luca was more made for war and its risks and glories than for the wheel and the brush of the bottega; but he had loved Pacifica ever since he had come down one careless holy day into Urbino, and had bound himself to her father's service in a heedless moment of eagerness to breathe the same air and dwell under the same roof as she did. He had gained but little for his pains; to see her at mass and at meal-times, now and then to be allowed to bring water from the well for her or feed her pigeons, to see her gray gown go down between the orchard trees and catch the sunlight, to hear the hum of her spinning-wheel, the thrum of her viol,—this was the uttermost he got of joy in two long years; and how he envied Raffaelle running along the stone floor of the loggia to leap into her arms, to hang upon her skirts, to pick the summer fruit with her, and sort with her the autumn herbs for drying!

"I love Pacifica!" he would say, with a groan, to Raf-

faelle ; and Raffaelle would say, with a smile, " Ah, Luca, so do I ! "

" It is not the same thing, my dear," sighed Luca ; " I want her for my wife."

" I shall have no wife ; I shall marry myself to painting," said Raffaelle, with a little grave, wise face looking out from under the golden roof of his fair hair. For he was never tired of watching his father painting the saints with their branch of palm on their ground of blue or of gold, or Maestro Benedetto making the dull clay glow with angels' wings and prophets' robes and holy legends told in color.

Now, one day as Raffaelle was standing and looking thus at his favorite window in the potter's house, his friend, the handsome, black-browed Luca, who was also standing there, did sigh so deeply and so deplorably that the child was startled from his dreams.

" Good Luca, what ails you ? " winding his arms about the young man's knees.

" Oh, 'Faello ! " mourned the apprentice, wofully. " Here is such a chance to win the hand of Pacifica, if only I had talent, such talent as that Giorgio of Gubbio has ! If the good Lord had only gifted me with a master's skill instead of all this bodily strength and sinew, like a wild hog of the woods, which avails me nothing here ! "

" What chance is it ? " asked Raffaelle, " and what is there new about Pacifica ? She told me nothing, and I was with her an hour."

" Dear simple one, she knows nothing of it," said Luca, heaving another tremendous sigh from his heart's deepest depths. " You must know that a new order has come in this very forenoon from the duke ; he wishes a dish and a jar of the very finest and firmest majolica to be painted with the story of Esther, and made ready in three months from this date, to then go as his gifts to his cousins of Gonzaga. He has ordered that no cost be spared in the work, but that the painting thereof be of the best that can be produced, and the price he will give is fifty scudi. Now, Maestro Benedetto, having known some time, it seems, of this order, has had in readiness several large oval dishes and beautiful big-bellied jars ; he gives one of each to each of his pupils,—to myself, to Berengario, to Tito, and Zenone. The master is sorely distraught that his eyesight permits him not himself to execute

the duke's commands ; but it is no secret that should one of us be so fortunate as to win the duke's approbation, the painter who does so shall become his partner here and shall have the hand of Pacifica. Some say that he has only put forth this promise as a stimulus to get the best work done of which his bottega is capable ; but I know Maestro Benedetto too well to deem him guilty of any such evasion. What he has said he will carry out ; if the vase and the dish win the duke's praise, they will also win Pacifica. Now you see, 'Faello mine, why I am so bitterly sad of heart, for I am a good craftsman enough at the wheel and the furnace, and I like not ill the handling and the molding of the clay, but at the painting of the clay I am but a tyro, and Berengario or even the little Zenone will beat me ; of that I am sure."

Raffaelle heard all this in silence, leaning his elbow on his friend's knee, and his chin on the palms of his own hands. He knew that the other pupils were better painters by far than his Luca, though not one of them was such a good-hearted or noble-looking youth, and for none of them did the maiden Pacifica care.

"How long a time is given for the jar and the dish to be ready ?" he asked, at length.

"Three months, my dear," said Luca, with a sigh sadder than ever. "But if it were three years, what difference would it make ? You cannot cudgel the divine grace of art into a man with blows as you cudgel speed into a mule, and I shall be a dolt at the end of the time as I am now. What said your good father to me but yesternight?—and he *is* good to me and does not despise me. He said, 'Luca, my son, it is of no more avail for you to sigh for Pacifica than for the moon. Were she mine I would give her to you, for you have a heart of gold, but Signor Benedetto will not ; for never, I fear me, will you be able to decorate anything more than an apothecary's mortar or a barber's basin. If I hurt you, take it not ill ; I mean kindness, and were I a stalwart youth like you I would go try my fortunes in the Free Companies in France or Spain, or down in Rome, for you are made for a soldier.'" That was the best even your father could say for me, 'Faello."

"But Pacifica," said the child,—“Pacifica would not wish you to join the Free Companies ?”

"God knows," said Luca, hopelessly. "Perhaps she would not care."

"I am sure she would," said Raffaele, "for she does love you, Luca, though she cannot say so, being but a girl, and Signor Benedetto against you. But that red-cap you tamed for her—how she loves it, how she caresses it; and half is for you, Luca, half for the bird!"

Luca kissed him.

But the tears rolled down the poor youth's face, for he was much in earnest and filled with despair.

"Even if she did, if she do," he murmured, hopelessly, "she never would let me know it, since her father forbids a thought of me; and now here is this trial of skill at the duke's order come to make things worse, and if that swaggering Berengario of Fano win her, then truly will I join the free lances and pray heaven send me swift shrive and shroud."

Raffaele was very pensive for a while; then he raised his head and said:

"I have thought of something, Luca. But I do not know whether you will let me try it."

"You angel child! What would your old Luca deny to you? But as for helping me, my dear, put that thought out of your little mind forever, for no one can help me, 'Faello, not the saints themselves, since I was born a dolt!"

Raffaele kissed him, and said, "now listen!"

A few days later Signor Benedetto informed his pupils, in ceremonious audience, of the duke's command, and of his own intentions; he did not pronounce his daughter's name to the youths, but he spoke in terms that were clear enough to assure them that whoever had the good fortune and high merit to gain the duke's choice of his pottery should have the honor of becoming associate in his own famous bottega. Now, it had been known in Urbino ever since Pacifica had gone to her first communion, that whoever pleased her father well enough to become his partner would also have to please her as her husband. Not much attention was given to maidens' wishes in those times, and no one thought the master-potter either unjust or cruel in thus suiting himself before he suited his daughter. And what made the hearts of all the young men quake and sink the lowest was the fact that Signor Benedetto offered the competition not only to his own apprentices but to any native of the

duchy of Urbino. For who could tell what hero might not step forth from obscurity and gain the great prize of this fair hand of Pacifica's? And with her hand would go many a broad gold ducat, and the heritage of the wide old gray stone house, and many an old jewel and old brocade that were kept there in dusky sweet-smelling cabinets, and also more than one good piece of land, smiling with corn and fruit-trees, outside the gates in the lower pastures to the westward.

Luca, indeed, never thought of these things, but the other three pupils did, and other youths as well. Had it not been for the limitation as to birth within the duchy, many a gallant young painter from the other side of the Apennines, many a lusty *vasalino* or *boccalino* from the workshops of fair Florence herself, or from the Lombard cities, might have traveled there in hot haste as fast as horses could carry them, and come to paint the clay for the sake of so precious a recompense. But Urbino men they had to be; and poor Luca, who was so full of despair that he could have almost thrown himself headlong from the rocks, was thankful to destiny for even so much slender mercy as this,—that the number of his rivals was limited.

"Had I been you," Giovanni Sanzio ventured once to say respectfully to Signor Benedetto, "I think I should have picked out for my son-in-law the best youth that I knew, not the best painter; for be it said in all reverence, my friend, the greatest artist is not always the truest man, and by the hearthstone humble virtues have sometimes high claim."

Then Signor Benedetto had set his stern face like a flint, knowing very well what youth Messer Giovanni would have liked to name to him.

"I have need of a good artist in my bottega to keep up its fame," he had said, stiffly. "My vision is not what it was, and I should be loath to see Urbino ware fall back, whilst Pesaro and Gubbio and Castel-Durante gain ground every day. Pacifica must pay the penalty, if penalty there be, for being the daughter of a great artist."

Mirthful, keen-witted Sanzio smiled to himself, and went his way in silence; for he who loved Andrea Mantegna did not bow down in homage before the old master-potter's estimation of himself, which was in truth somewhat overweening in its vanity.

"Poor Pacifica!" he thought: "if only my 'Faello were but some decade older!"

He, who could not foresee the future, the splendid, wondrous, unequaled future that awaited his young son, wished nothing better for him than a peaceful painter's life here in old Urbino, under the friendly shadow of the Montefeltro's palace-walls.

Meanwhile, where think you was Raffaele? Half the day, or all the day, and every day whenever he could, where think you was he? Well, in the attic of Luca, before a bowl and a dish almost as big as himself. The attic was a breezy, naked place, underneath the arches supporting the roof of Maestro Benedetto's dwelling. Each pupil had one of these garrets to himself,—a rare boon, for which Luca came to be very thankful, for without it he could not have sheltered his angel; and the secret that Raffaele had whispered to him that day of the first conference had been, "*Let me try and paint it!*"

For a long time Luca had been afraid to comply, had only forbore indeed from utter laughter at the idea from his love and reverence for the little speaker. Baby Sanzio, who was only just seven years old as the April tulips reddened the corn, painting a majolica dish and vase to go to the Gonzaga of Mantua! The good fellow could scarcely restrain his shouts of mirth at the audacious fancy; and nothing had kept him grave but the sight of that most serious face of Raffaele, looking up to his with serene, sublime self-confidence,—nay, perhaps, rather, confidence in heaven and heaven's gifts.

"Let me try!" said the child a hundred times. He would tell no one, only Luca would know; and if he failed—well, there would only be the spoiled pottery to pay for, and had he not two whole ducats that the duke had given him when the court had come to behold his father's designs for the altar-frescoes at San Dominco di Cagli?

So utterly in earnest was he, and so intense and blank was Luca's absolute despair, that the young man had in turn given way to his entreaties. "Never can I do aught," he thought, bitterly, looking at his own clumsy designs. "And sometimes by the help of cherubs the saints work miracles."

"It will be no miracle," said Raffaele, hearing him murmur this: "it will be myself, and that which the dear God has put into me."

From that hour Luca let him do what he would, and through all these lovely early summer days the child came and shut himself up in the garret, and studied, and thought, and worked, and knitted his pretty fair brows, and smiled in tranquil satisfaction, according to the mood he was in, and the progress of his labors.

Giovanni Sanzio went away at that time to paint an altar-piece over at Città di Castello, and his little son for once was glad he was absent. Messer Giovanni would surely have remarked the long and frequent visits of Raffaele to the attic, and would, in all likelihood, have obliged him to pore over his Latin, or to take exercise in the open fields ; but his mother said nothing, content that he should be amused and safe, and knowing well that Pacifica loved him and would let him come to no harm under her roof. Pacifica herself did wonder that he deserted her so perpetually for the garret. But one day when she questioned him the sweet-faced rogue clung to her and murmured, "Oh Pacifica, I do want to win you, because he loves you so ; and I do love you both !" And she grew pale, and answered him "Ah, dear, if he could !" and then said never a word more, but went to her distaff ; and Raffaele saw great tears fall off her lashes down among the flax.

She thought he went to the attic to watch how Luca painted, and loved him more than ever for that, but knew in the hopelessness of her heart—as Luca also knew it in his—that the good and gallant youth would never be able to create anything that would go as the duke's gifts to the Gonzaga of Mantua. And she did care for Luca. She had spoken to him but rarely indeed, yet passing in and out of the same doors, and going to the same church offices, and dwelling always beneath the same roof, he had found means of late for a word, a flower, a serenade. And he was so handsome, so brave, and so gentle, too, and so full of deference. Poor Pacifica cared not in the least whether he could paint or not. He could have made her happy.

In the attic Raffaele passed the most anxious hours of all his sunny little life. He would not allow Luca even to look at what he did—he barred the door and worked ; when he went away he locked his work in a wardrobe. The swallows came in and out of the unglazed window, and fluttered all around him ; the morning sunbeams came in too, and made a nimbus

round his golden head, like that which his father gilded above the heads of saints. Raffaelle worked on, not looking off, though clang of cymbal, or fanfare of trumpet, often told him that there was much going on worth looking at down below. He was only seven years old, but he labored as earnestly as if he were a man grown, his little rosy fingers gripping that pencil which was to make him in life and death famous as kings are not famous, and let his tender body lie in its last sleep in the Pantheon of Rome.

He had covered hundreds of sheets with designs before he had succeeded in getting embodied the ideas that haunted him. When he had pleased himself at last, he set to work to transfer his imaginations to the clay in color in the subtle luminous metallic enamel that characterizes Urbino majolica.

Ah, how glad he was now that his father had let him draw from the time he was two years old, and that of late Messer Benedetto had shown him something of the mysteries of painting on biscuit and producing the metallic lustre which was the especial glory of the pottery of the duchy.

How glad he was, and how his little heart bounded and seemed to sing in this his first enjoyment of the joyous liberties and powers of creative work.

Luca looked at him (not at his work, for the child had made him promise not to do so), and began to marvel at his absorption, his intentness, the evident facility with which he worked: the little figure, leaning over the great dish on the bare board of the table, with the oval opening of the window and the blue sky beyond it, began to grow sacred to him with more than the sanctity of childhood. Raffaelle's face grew very serious, too, and lost its color, and his large hazel eyes looked very big and grave and dark.

"Perhaps Signor Giovanni will be angry with me if ever he knows," thought poor Luca; but it was too late to alter anything now. The child Sanzio had become his master.

So Raffaelle, unknown to any one else, worked on and on there in the attic while the tulips bloomed and withered, and the honeysuckle was in flower in the hedges, and the wheat and barley were being cut in the quiet fields lying far down below in the sunshine, for midsummer was come; the three months all but a week had passed by. It was known that every one was ready to compete for the duke's choice.

One afternoon Raffaelle took Luca by the hand and said to him, "Come."

He led the young man up to the table, beneath the unglazed window, where he had passed so many of these ninety days of the spring and summer.

Luca gave a great cry, and stood gazing, gazing, gazing. Then he fell on his knees and embraced the little feet of the child: it was the first homage that he, whose life became one beautiful song of praise, received from man.

"Dear Luca," he said softly, "do not do that. If it be indeed good, let us thank God."

What his friend saw was the great oval dish and the great jar or vase standing with the sunbeams full upon them, and the brushes and the tools and the colors strewn all around. And they shone with lustrous opaline hues and wondrous flame-like glories and gleaming iridescence, like melted jewels, and there were all manner of graceful symbols and classic designs wrought upon them; and their borders were garlanded with cherubs and flowers, bearing the arms of Montefeltro, and the landscapes were the tender, homely landscapes round about Urbino; and the mountains and the solemn radiance that the Apennines wore at evening-time, and amidst the figures there was one supreme, white-robed, golden-crowned Esther, to whom the child painter had given the face of Pacifica. And this wondrous creation, wrought by a baby's hand, had safely and secretly passed the ordeal of the furnace, and had come forth without spot or flaw.

"Oh, wondrous boy! Oh, angel sent unto men!" sighed the poor prentice, as he gazed; and his heart was so full that he burst into tears.

"Let us thank God," said Raffaelle, again: and he joined his small hands that had wrought this miracle, and said his *Laus Domini*.

When the precious jar and the great platter were removed to the wardrobe and shut up in safety behind the steel wards of the locker, Luca said, timidly, feeling twenty years in age behind the wisdom of this divine child. "But, dearest boy, I do not see how your marvelous and most exquisite accomplishment can advantage me. Even if you would allow it to pass as mine, I could not accept such a thing: it would be a fraud, a shame: not even to win Pacifica could I consent."

"Be not so hasty, good friend," said Raffaelle. "Wait

just a little longer yet and see. I have my own idea. Do trust in me."

"Heaven speaks in you, that I believe," said Luca, humbly. Raffaele answered not, but ran downstairs, and passing Pacifica, threw his arms about her in more than his usual affectionate way.

"Pacifica, be of good heart," he murmured, and would not be questioned, but ran homeward to his mother.

"Can it be that Luca has done well," thought Pacifica; but she feared the child's wishes had outrun his wisdom. He could not be any judge—a child of seven years, even though he were the son of that good and honest painter and poet, Giovanni Sanzio.

The next morning was midsummer day. Now, the pottery was all to be placed in the forenoon in the bottega of Signor Benedetto; and the Duke Guidobaldo was then to come and make his choice from amidst them; and the master-potter, a little because he was a courtier, and more because he liked to affect a mighty indifference and to show he had no favoritism, had declared that he would not himself see the competing works of art until the eyes of the Lord of Montefeltro also fell upon them.

As for Pacifica, she had locked herself in her chamber, alone with her intense agitation. The young men were swaggering about, and taunting each other, and boasting. Luca alone sat apart, thrumming an old lute. Giovanni Sanzio, who had ridden home at evening from Città di Castello, came in from his own house and put his hand on the youth's shoulder.

"I hear the Pesaro men have brought fine things. Take courage, my lad. Maybe we can entreat the duke to dissuade Pacifica's father from this tyrannous disposal of her hand."

Luca shook his head wearily.

There would be one beautiful thing there, indeed, he knew; but what use would that be to him?

"The child—the child—" he stammered, and remembered that he must not disclose Raffaele's secret.

"My child?" said Signor Giovanni. "Oh, he will be here; he will be sure to be here; wherever there is a painted thing to be seen, there always, be sure, is Raffaele."

Then the good man sauntered within from the loggia, to

exchange salutations with Ser Benedetto, who, in a suit of fine crimson with doublet of sad colored velvet, was standing ready to advance bareheaded into the street as soon as the hoofs of the duke's charger should strike on the stones.

"You must be anxious in your thoughts," said Signor Giovanni to him. "They say a youth from Pesaro brings something fine: If you should find yourself bound to take a stranger into your work-room and your home——"

"If he be a man of genius he will be welcome," answered Messer Ronconi, pompously. "Be he of Pesaro, or of Fano, or of Castel-Durante, I go not back from my word: I keep my word to my own hinderance even, ever."

"Let us hope it will bring you only joy and triumph here," said his neighbor, who knew him to be an honest man and true, if over-obstinate and too vain of his own place in Urbino.

"Our lord the duke!" shouted the people standing in the street; and Ser Benedetto walked out with stately tread to receive the honor of his master's visit to his bottega.

Raffaelle slipped noiselessly up to his father's side, and slid his little hand into Sanzio's.

"You are not surely afraid of our good Guidobaldo!" said the father, with a laugh and some little surprise, for Raffaelle was very pale, and his lower lip trembled a little.

"No," said the child simply.

The young duke and his court came riding down the street, and paused before the old stone house of the master-potter, —splendid gentlemen, though only in their morning apparel, with noble Barbary steeds fretting under them, and little pages and liveried varlets about their steps. Usually, unless he went hunting or on a visit to some noble, Guidobaldo, like his father, walked about Urbino like any one of his citizens; but he knew the pompous and somewhat vainglorious temper of Messer Benedetto, and good-naturedly was willing to humor its harmless vanities. Bowing to the ground, the master-potter led the way, walking backward into his bottega, the courtiers followed their prince; Giovanni Sanzio with his little son and a few other privileged persons went in also at due distance. At the farther end of the workshop stood the pupils and the artists from Pesaro and other places in the duchy whose works were there in competition. In all there were some ten competitors: poor Luca, who had set his own

work on the table with the rest, as he was obliged to do, stood hindmost of all, shrinking back to hide his misery, into the deepest shadow of the deep-bayed lattice window.

On the narrow deal benches that serve as tables on working-days to the pottery-painters were ranged the dishes and the jars, with a number attached to each—no name to any, because Signor Benedetto was resolute to prove his own absolute disinterestedness in the matter of choice : he wished for the best artist. Prince Guidobaldo, doffing his plumed cap courteously, walked down the long room and examined each production in its turn. On the whole, the collection made a brave display of majolica, though he was perhaps a little disappointed at the result in each individual case, for he had wanted something out of the common run and absolutely perfect. Still, with fair words he complimented Signor Benedetto on the brave show, and only before the work of poor Luca was he entirely silent, since indeed silence was the greatest kindness he could show to it : the drawing was bold and regular, but the coloring was hopelessly crude, glaring, and ill-disposed.

At last, before a vase and a dish that stood modestly at the very farthest end of the deal bench, the duke gave a sudden exclamation of delight, and Signor Benedetto grew crimson with pleasure and surprise, and Giovanni Sanzio pressed a little nearer and tried to see over the shoulders of the gentlemen of the court, feeling sure that something rare and beautiful must have called forth that cry of wonder from the lord of Montefeltro, and having seen at a glance that for his poor friend Luca there was no sort of hope.

"This is beyond all comparison," said Guidobaldo, taking the great oval dish up reverently in his hands. "Maestro Benedetto, I do felicitate you indeed, that you should possess such a pupil. He will be a glory to our beloved Urbino."

"It is indeed most excellent work, my lord duke," said the master-potter, who was trembling with surprise, and dared not show all the astonishment and emotion that he felt at the discovery of so exquisite a creation in his bottega. "It must be," he added, for he was a very honest man, "the work of one of the lads of Pesaro or Castel-Durante. I have no such craftsman in my workshop. It is beautiful exceedingly."

"It is worth its weight in gold !" said the prince, sharing

his emotion. "Look, gentlemen—look ! Will not the fame of Urbino be borne beyond the Apennines and Alps ?"

Thus summoned, the court and the citizens came to look, and averred truly that never in Urbino had they seen such painting on majolica.

"But whose is it?" said Guidobaldo, impatiently, casting his eyes over the gathered group in the background of apprentices and artists. "Maestro Benedetto, I pray you, the name of the artist, I pray you, quick !"

"It is marked number eleven, my lord," answered the master-potter. "Ho, you who reply to that number, stand out and give your name. My lord duke has chosen your work. Ho, there ! do you hear me ?"

But not one of the group moved. The young men looked from one to another. Who was this nameless rival ? There were but ten of themselves.

"Ho, there !" repeated Signor Benedetto, getting angry. "Cannot you find your tongue, I say ? Who has wrought this work ? Silence is but insolence to his highness and to me."

Then the child Sanzio loosened his little hand from his father's hold, and went forward, and stood before the master-potter.

"I painted it," he said, with a pleased smile: "I, Raffaele."

Can you not fancy, without telling, the confusion, the wonder, the rapture, the incredulity, the questions, the wild ecstasy of praise that followed on the discovery of the child artist ? Only the presence of Guidobaldo kept it in anything like decent quietude, and even he, all duke though he was, felt his eyes wet and felt his heart swell ; for he himself was childless, and for the joy that Giovanni Sanzio felt that day he would have given his patrimony and duchy.

He took a jewel hung on a gold chain from his own breast and threw it over Raffaele's shoulders.

"There is your first guerdon," he said : "you will have many, O wondrous child, who shall live when we are dust !"

Raffaele, who himself was all the while quite tranquil and unmoved, kissed the duke's hand with sweetest grace, and turned to his own father.

"Is it true I have won my lord duke's prize ?"

"Quite true, my angel !" said Giovanni Sanzio, with tremulous voice.

Raffaelle looked up at Maestro Benedetto.

"Then I claim the hand of Pacifica."

There was a smile on all the faces round, even on the darker countenances of the vanquished painters.

"Oh, would indeed you were of age to be my son by marriage, as you are the son of my heart!" murmured Signor Benedetto. "Dear and marvelous child, you are but jesting, I know. I could deny you nothing; and truly it is you who are my master."

"I am your pupil," said Raffaelle, with that pretty, serious smile of his, his little fingers playing with the ducal jewel. "I could never have painted that majolica yonder had you not taught me the secrets and management of your colors. Now, dear maestro mine, and you, O my lord duke, do hear me! I by the terms of the contest have won the hand of Pacifica and the right of association with Messer Ronconi. I take these rights and I give them over to my dear friend Luca of Fano, because he is the honestest man in all the world, and does honor Signor Benedetto and love Pacifica as no other can do so well, and Pacifica loves him; and my lord duke will say that this all will be well."

So with the grave, innocent audacity of a child he spoke—this seven-year-old painter, who was greater than any there.

Signor Benedetto stood mute, sombre, agitated. Luca had sprung forward and dropped on one knee; he was as pale as ashes. Raffaelle looked at him with a smile.

"My lord duke," he said, with his little gentle smile, "you have chosen my work; defend me in my rights."

"Listen to the voice of an angel, my good Benedetto; heaven speaks by him," said Guidobaldo, gravely, laying his hand on the arm of his master-potter.

Harsh Signor Benedetto burst into tears.

"I can refuse him nothing," he said, with a sob. "He will give such a glory into Urbino as never the world hath seen!"

"And call down this fair Pacifica whom Raffaelle has won," said the sovereign of the duchy, "and I will give her myself as her dower as many gold pieces as we can cram into this famous vase. An honest youth who loves her and whom she loves,—what better can you do, Benedetto? Young man, rise up and be happy. An angel has descended on earth this day for you."

But Luca heard not : he was still kneeling at the feet of
Raffaello, where the world has knelt ever since.

A STRANGE LANGUAGE

BY EDRIC VREDENBURG

An amusing tale of a great scholar's encounter with a new language.
From Wit and Wisdom.

Professor Jonathan Dominic Adams was a very great scholar. As everybody knew who knew anything, he was considered *the* authority on the Greek poets and everything appertaining to the Greek language, both ancient and modern. Greek was his hobby, his pleasure, the dream of his life, the Alpha and Omega of his every day's existence; and to anyone who would or could not converse on his favorite topic, the professor was most decidedly a bore.

Dr. Adams was sufficiently a man of the world to know that he owed his being in a very great measure to a woman. He was aware also that besides the heroines who lived in his books, there were women who moved in the outer world. But beyond this knowledge he knew nothing of the weaker sex, to whom Greek, in most cases, was but a word and nothing more. Therefore it was with the greatest consternation that one summer evening, as he was strolling homewards across the Green Park, he caught himself thinking, not of his favorite and only topic, but of a woman, and that woman a very sweet and pretty creature of twenty-five.

Dr. Adams tried his hardest to bring his thoughts into their usual, and to him, proper channel, but to no avail. To his horror he found that he had even forgotten some lines of Homer, but that he could not forget a pair of bright blue eyes and the smile of rosy lips. To the credit of the professor it must be said that he gave up the struggle, and for the remainder of the evening dreamed of Miss Julia Drewry, while Homer for the time being was dethroned.

Now while Professor Jonathan Adams was dreaming of Miss Julia Drewry, Miss Julia Drewry was dreaming of Professor Jonathan Adams, thinking of him and the study of Greek literature. For she also was a great scholar, having left Girton with all the honors that it was possible for the fair student to take away with her. But although she knew everything that there was to be known about divinity, classics,

mathematics, natural science, moral science, history, German, Anglo-Saxon, etc., etc., her favorite subject was Greek.

Somewhat to her father's dismay, he perceived that his daughter ignored the natural pleasures of youth, while she pestered him from morning till night with dissertations on this dead language. Learned man as he was himself, and an old college friend of Dr. Adams, he would have preferred Julia to take more interest in her surroundings and mix more freely with her fellow-creatures, instead of spoiling her pretty eyes with continuous study. But no, Miss Julia turned up her little nose at the girls she met, and at the young men too, for up to the present she had not found one with whom she could talk upon the subjects which engrossed her mind. Her father had one slight consolation, and that was that the girl, with all her faults, took an interest in her personal appearance, dressing well, if in the Greek style. Whether she wore blue stockings he never inquired, and of course we cannot ; besides, it has nothing whatever to do with the story.

It so happened that one day, while taking his morning constitutional, Mr. Drewry stumbled across Dr. Adams, or, to put it more correctly, Dr. Adams stumbled over Mr. Drewry. The worthy professor, instead of looking where he was going, was walking along with his eyes fixed on the ground in a brown study.

"Bless my heart !" exclaimed Drewry ; "why, it's Adams. How are you—how are you ? What an age it is since we have met !"

"It must be ten years—ten long years ; and yet it seems only yesterday," replied Adams.

"Long enough for many changes. My poor wife has been dead these ten years ; but, thank God, I have a daughter to look after me. You saw her when she was fifteen. And you, are you married ?"

"No, indeed," said the professor ; "I am but wedded to my work."

"Ah, yes, I have seen your name mentioned now and again in connection with your Greek studies. But don't let us stand here talking ; come home with me. Julia has often expressed a wish to see you again ; she has questions to ask you, and some theories to propound, for she also is Greek—very much so."

The two friends walked home to Mr. Drewry's humble but neat little cottage in Fulham. And from that moment—and I tell it with sorrow—Mr. Drewry had, to put it vulgarly, to take a back seat. The professor found Julia charming, and Julia considered the professor delightful, while poor Mr. Drewry had to listen to endless arguments upon the eternal Greek. At first he endeavored to divert his guest and draw him out about old college days, but five minutes after Dr. Adams would turn to the daughter and take up the conversation at the point where he had been interrupted.

The next day the professor called again, and also on the next, and so on, and so on, until he was regarded in the light of a tame cat. Mr. Drewry took to his newspapers and his books, leaving his guest for hours with his daughter.

And what were the consequences?

Why, that Professor Adams after six weeks found his eyes wandering to the fair Julia's face instead of keeping them upon the books the two were studying together. And Miss Drewry would think to herself, as she waited for the professor's diurnal visit, that she had at last met a man whom she would be happy to marry, despite the fact that he was on the wrong side of forty and had a very bald head.

Matters had come to this serious point on the day Dr. Adams walked across the Green Park, and when the image of the girl totally obliterated the image of Homer. That night the professor, as has already been told, gave himself up to dreaming about Miss Julia, and the following afternoon he put two questions to her.

The first was whether she would be willing to help him with a work he proposed to bring out in twenty volumes, namely, the "Lives of the Greek Poets," with criticisms on their poems, the whole to be written in Greek. To this proposition Julia readily consented.

The second question was that, as the undertaking would be a work of years, and they would have to be continually together, would she object to becoming his wife to facilitate the plan. To this Miss Drewry, after a proper amount of womanly indecision, also consented.

Mr. Drewry at first, somewhat naturally, objected to the marriage, but he was very soon overruled, and in two months the wedding took place. Although Autumn was united to Summer, the combination turned out a bright and happy one

The professor came to live at the cottage in Fulham, Mr. Drewry remaining with his daughter, and a more peaceful and contented trio never existed.

The "Lives of the Greek Poets" went on flourishingly. The first volume appeared, and was received with great favor by the critics. But when the second volume was but half written a sudden interruption took place. It was a very natural one, and one to be wished for—a young Master Adams made his appearance upon the scene, of course to the overthrow of his mother's work.

"For the time being only, I trust," the professor would say to himself, as he laid down his pen to act the part of errand-boy; for he was continually being desired to run for either the baby's bottle, or lime water, or such-like infantile requisites. Then he was asked to step upstairs and see his son smile for the first time, and now and again was even required to hold him.

But after a few weeks of this unaccustomed occupation, Dr. Adams became impatient for his wife to return to the study and help him to carry on the work they had commenced together. So after hinting many times that he wished for her assistance, which hinting she seemed to ignore, he decided one morning to ask her point blank to give the baby in charge of the nurse, and devote a few hours to the "Lives of the Greek Poets."

With this intention he went upstairs to his wife's room, and as the door was open, he heard her addressing somebody or something in a very peculiar, and to him entirely new, language. He paused on the landing and listened. If he had had any hair on the top of his head it would have stood on end. Could this be his classical Julia speaking this extraordinary jargon! This is part of what he heard:

"Didums then love his icle barthy-warthy. The darding icle boysey-woysey! Agoo! Agoo! Didums try and bite the spongey-wongey, naughty icle sing! Naughty icle sing to make his back as stiff as a poker."

Dr. Adams peeped through the opening of the door and beheld his wife washing the baby. He continued to listen

"Agoo! Agoo! Didums want to cry den when he's taken ou of de nicey warm water. There then, does him want to kick kicky-wicky, kicky-wicky—nurse, where is the powder? Ah thank you—was him being basted, then, like a icle chicken!

Oh, I could eat him up, my pretty petty-wetty? I lub him so! Ah, poor, poor icle wee ting! Didums have the hiccoughs! Naughty, naughty hiccoughs! Shall mummy beat the horrid, nasty hiccoughs then—nurse pass me the sugar, please; perhaps that will do the little darling good. No sugar up here? Just ask Dr. Adams to fetch the sugar-basin from the dining-room cupboard."

Professor Adams beat a precipitate retreat, and on gaining the hall seized his hat and went out for a long walk. With his hands thrust deep into his pockets, and his hat placed over his eyes, he gave himself up to very deep thought. But he thought not of the Greek language, but of the new tongue he had just heard. At first his face was very stern, but it gradually and gradually relaxed until it beamed forth into a very pleasant and sweet smile.

"Ah, what a fool I have been!" he exclaimed. "What a pretty picture it was to see her bending over my baby boy, and speaking a language to him that he only could understand! Greek in future shall be for me. Baby in future shall be for Julia, with just a little bit of him for me also. Women can be, and are, very great, but what a little thing will upset their greatness, and make them what they ought to be—sweeter and—and—well—why, *women!*"

The "Lives of the Greek Poets" came out, but at longer intervals than was at first intended, for Dr. Adams did all the work himself. His wife was always ready to listen to the MS. when he read it aloud to her, and the professor was glad to get any advice that she might be able and willing to give.

Mrs. Adams in future attended to the comforts of her husband her baby, and her father, and was also glad to get any advice *they* were willing and able to give.

Mr. Drewry was more happy than he had been for many a long day, for he could now get his daughter and son-in-law to talk on subjects other than Greek. But if he was ever at a loss for companionship, he could always resort to the new language, in which he was very proficient, and converse by the hour with his grandson, to their mutual benefit and pleasure.

ETCHING : THE THREE DRAWERS

BY CATULLE MENDÈS

Tells of a modern Portia's shrewdness. Translated from the French by E. C. Waggener for Short Stories—Copyrighted.

With the resolute gesture of one who would never more change her mind, Comtesse Madeleine pointed to the Japanese cabinet, the red and gold lacquer of its finish shining like a jewel under the glow of the lamp flame.

"Take time for reflection, Valentin, on the choice you make," said she, with a solemn air, "for in one of those three drawers you will find the answer to the suit with which you have ceaselessly pursued me for six months past. If you put your hand upon the response that says 'Yes,' I cease to repulse you, and lend willing ear to the vows you profess. If you miss this drawer and choose another, you will never see me again !"

"Two throws to one against me !" murmured the troubled lover ; "alack-a-day ! my soul, what cruel whim possesses you ?"

"No whim at all, my friend," returned Madeleine calmly ; "I purpose to be able to put the blame upon Chance, should things go ill between us."

Valentin wavered and debated, for a long time, between the three drawers, his trembling fingers going from one to the other, but fearing even to as much as touch a knob in his dread of a wrong choice. Forced at last to a decision, with closed eyes and relying on the mercy of Providence, he stretched out his hand—oh, joy ! oh, infinite delight ! the answer—a single leaf of rose pink paper held the adorable word—"Yes !"

The lover, however, was still dissatisfied ; in the midst of his rapture his brow clouded anew.

Madeleine, perplexed, smilingly questioned him.

"A worry," he answered, "a worry that tortures me !"

"Another, you ungrateful wretch ! What now ?"

"That it is to Chance I owe you, and not to yourself !"

"To Chance," began she, laughed gleefully, turned swiftly and—there, under his eyes, were two other sheets of rose pink paper.

"You stupid boy !" she cried, "'Yes'" is the answer that I put in all three of the drawers !"

THE PRICE OF A LIFE

BY EUGÈNE SCRIBE

This romantic story of a strange experience in the life of a gentleman of Brittany is supposed to be taken from his memoirs. Translated from the French by Linda de Kowalewska, and illustrated by Charles Lederer for Short Stories—Copyrighted.

opening the door of the salon, came to tell us that the post-chaise was ready. My mother and my sister threw themselves into my arms. "There is yet time," said they. "It is not too late. Give up this journey and remain with us." I replied—"My mother, I am a gentleman. I am twenty years old, my country needs me, I must win fame and renown; be it in the army, be it at court, I must be heard of, t speak of me."

when you are far away, tell
ard, what will become of me,
mother?"

"You will be happy and proud to hear of your son's successes——"

"And if you are killed in some battle?"

"What matters it? What is life? Only a dream. One dreams only of glory at twenty, and when one is a gentleman; but do not fear, you will see me return to you in a few years, a colonel, a *maréchal-de-camp*, or, better still, with a fine position at Versailles."

"Indeed! When will that be?"

"It will come, and I shall be respected and envied by all—and then—everyone will take off their hats to me—and then—I will marry my cousin Henriette, and I will find good husbands for my sisters, and we shall all live together tranquil and happy on my estates in Brittany."

"Why not do all that to-day, my son? Has not your father left you the finest fortune in the country? Where is there, for ten leagues around, a richer domain, or a more beautiful chateau than that of Roche-Bernard? Are you not loved and respected by your vassals? When you walk through the village, is there a single or who fails to salute you and take off his hat? Do not leave us, my son, remain here with your friends, near your sisters, near your old mother, whom perhaps you will not find here when you return. Do not waste in search of vain glory, or abridge by cares and to-morrows of all kinds, the days which already go so swiftly. Life is sweet, my child, and the sun of Brittany is so bright!" So saying she led me to the open window and pointed to the beautiful avenues of my park; the grand old chestnut trees were in full bloom, and the air was sweet with the fragrance of the lilacs and the honeysuckles, whose leaves sparkled in the sunlight.

All the house-servants awaited me in the ante-room.

They were so sad and quiet that they seemed to say to me: "Do not go, young master, do not go." Hortense, my eldest sister, pressed me in her arms, and my little sister Amélie, who was in one corner of the room occupied in looking at some engravings in a volume of La Fontaine, came to me, and handing me the book, cried: "Read, read, my brother!" It was the fable of "The Two Pigeons."

But I repulsed them all and said: "I am twenty years old. *Je suis gentilhomme.* I *must* in honor and glory. Let me go. And I hastened to the court-yard, and got into the post-chaise, when a woman appeared at the landing of the stairs. It was my beautiful cousin Henriette! She did not weep, she did not say a word . . . but, pale and trembling, she could scarcely stand. She waved me an adieu with



her white handkerchief, then fell unconscious. I ran to her, raised her, put my arms around her, and swore to her eternal love; and the moment she recovered consciousness, leaving her in my mother's care, I ran to the chaise, and, without turning my head, drove away. If I had looked at Henriette I might have wavered. A few moments afterward we were rolling along the grand route.



For a long while I thought of nothing but Henriette, my mother and my sisters, and all the happiness I had left behind me; but these thoughts were effaced in the measure that the towers of Roche-Bernard faded from my view, and soon ambitious dreams of glory spread over my spirit. What projects! What *châteaux en Espagne*! What glorious deeds I performed in that chaise! Riches, honors, dignities, rewards of all kinds! I refused nothing. I merited them, and I accepted all; at last, elevating myself as I advanced on my journey, I was duke—governor of a province—and no less a personage than a *maréchal* of France when I arrived in the evening at my destination. The voice of my valet, who addressed me modestly as *Monsieur le Chevalier*, forced me to abdicate for the time being, and I was obliged to return to the earth and to myself.

The following day I continued my journey and dreamed the same dreams, for the way was long. At last we arrived at Sedan, where I expected to visit the *Duc de C****, an old friend of our family. He would (I thought) surely take me with him to Paris, where he was expected at the end of the month, and then he would present me at Versailles, and obtain for me, at the very least, a company of dragoons.

I arrived in Sedan in the evening—too late to present myself at the chateau of my friend (which was some distance from the city), so I delayed my visit until the next day, and put up at the “Armes de France,” the best hotel in the place.

I supped at the table d’hôte and asked the way to take on the morrow to the chateau of the *Duc de C****.

“Any one can show you,” said a young officer who sat near me, “for it is well known the whole country round. It was in this chateau that died a great warrior, a very celebrated man—*Maréchal Fabert*!” Then the conversation fell, as was natural between young military men, on the *Maréchal Fabert*. They spoke of his battles, his exploits, of his

modesty, which caused him to refuse letters of nobility and the collar of his order offered him by Louis XIV. Above all, they marveled at the good fortune which comes to some men. What inconceivable happiness for a simple soldier to rise to the rank of *maréchal* of France—he, a man of no family, the son of a printer! They could cite no other case similar to his, and the masses did not hesitate to ascribe his elevation to supernatural causes. It was said that he had employed magic from his childhood, that he was a sorcerer, and that he had a compact with the devil; and our old landlord, who had all the credulity of our Breton peasants, swore to us that in this chateau of the *Duc de C * * **, where Fabert died, there had frequently been seen a black man whom no one knew; and that the servants had seen him enter Fabert's chamber and disappear, carrying with him the soul of the *maréchal*, which he had bought some years before, and which, therefore, belonged to him; and that even now, in the month of May, on the anniversary of Fabert's death, one can see at night a black man bearing a light, which is Fabert's soul.

This story amused us at dessert, and we gayly drank a bottle of champagne to the familiar demon of Fabert, praying for his patronage, and help to gain victories like those of *Collioure* and of *La Marfle*.

The next day I arose early and set out for the chateau, which proved to be an immense Gothic manor house, having nothing very remarkable about it. At any other time I would not have viewed it with any great interest; but now I gazed at it with feelings of curiosity as I recalled the strange story told us by the landlord of the "*Armes de France*."

The door was opened by an old valet, and when I told him I wished to see the *Duc de C * * **, he replied that he did not know whether his master was visible or not, or if he would receive me. I gave him my name and he went away, leaving me alone in a very large and gloomy hall, decorated with trophies of the chase, and family portraits. I waited some time, but he did not return. The silence was almost oppressive; I began to grow impatient and had already

counted two or three times all the family portraits, and all the beams in the ceiling, when I heard a noise in the wainscot.

It was a door which the wind had blown open. I looked up, and perceived a very pretty boudoir lighted by two great casements and a glass door which opened on a magnificent park. I advanced a few steps into the apartment, and paused suddenly at a strange spectacle. A man (his

which I had entered) was lying on a couch. He arose, and without perceiving me, ran quickly to the window.

Tears rolled down his cheeks and profound despair was imprinted on his features. He remained some time immovable, his head resting on his hands, then he commenced to walk with great strides across the room; turning he saw me, stopped suddenly, and trembled. As for myself, I was horrorstruck, and dazed in consequence of my indiscretion. I wished to retire, and murmured some incoherent apologies.

"Who are you? What do you want?" said he, in a deep voice, catching me by the arm.

I was very much frightened and embarrassed, but replied: "I am the Chevalier Bernard de la Roche-Bernard, and I have just arrived from Brittany."

"I know! I know!" said he, and throwing his arms around me, he embraced me warmly, and leading me to the couch made me sit near him, spoke to me rapidly of my father and of all my family, whom he knew so well that I concluded that it was the master of the chateau.

"You are Monsieur de C * * *, are you not?" asked I. He arose, looked at me with a strange glance and replied: "I was, but I am no longer. I am no longer anybody." Then seeing my astonishment he said: "Not a word, young man, do not question me."

I replied, blushing: "If, Monsieur, I have witnessed, without

wishing it, your chagrin and your sorrow, perhaps my devotion and my friendship can assuage your grief?"

"Yes, yes, you are right; not that you can change my condition, but you can receive, at least, my last wishes and my last vows. It is the only service that I ask of you."

He crossed the room, closed the door, then came and sat down beside me, who, agitated and trembling, awaited his words. They were somewhat grave and solemn, and his physiognomy, above all, had an expression that I had never before seen. His lofty brow, which I examined attentively, seemed marked by fate. His complexion was very pale, and his eyes were black, bright and piercing: and from time to time his features, altered by suffering, contracted under an ironical and infernal smile.

"That which I am about to relate to you," said he, "will confound your reason; you will doubt, you will not believe me, perhaps; even I often doubt still. I tell myself it cannot be: but the proofs are too real; and, is there not in all that surrounds us, in our organization even, many other mysteries that we are obliged to submit to, without being able to comprehend?" He paused a moment, as if to gather together his thoughts, passed his hand over his brow, and continued: "I was born in this chateau. I had two elder brothers, to whom fell the wealth and honors of our house. I had nothing to expect, nothing to look forward to but an abbé's mantle; nevertheless, ambitious dreams of glory and power fermented in my head, and made my heart throb with anticipation. Miserable in my obscurity, eager for renown, I thought only of means to acquire it, at any price, and these ideas made me insensible to all the pleasures, and all the sweetness of life. To me, the present was nothing; I only existed for the future, and this future presented itself to me under a most sombre aspect. I reached my thirtieth year without having accomplished anything;—then there arose in the capital literary lights whose brilliance penetrated even to our remote province. Ah! thought I, if I could at least make for myself a name in the world of letters, that might bring renown,

and therein lies true happiness. I had for a confidant of my chagrins an old servant, an aged negro, who had served in my family many years before my birth; he was the oldest person on the estate, or for miles around, for no one could recall his first appearance, and the country folk said that he had known the Maréchal Fabert, was present at his death, and that he was an evil spirit."

At that name, I started with surprise; the unknown paused and asked me the cause of my embarrassment.



"Nothing," said I; but I could not help thinking that the black man must be the one spoken of by the old landlord of the "*Armes de France*," the previous evening.

M. de C * * * continued:

"One day in Yago's presence (that was the old negro's name) I gave way to my feelings, bemoaned my obscurity, and bewailed my useless and monotonous life, and I cried aloud in my despair: 'I would willingly give ten years of my life to be placed in the first rank of our authors!'

"'Ten years,' said Yago, coolly; 'that is much, it is paying very dear for so little a thing; no matter, I accept your ten years; remember your promise, I will surely keep mine.'

"I cannot describe to you my great surprise on hearing him speak thus. I believed that his mind had become enfeebled by the weight of years. I shrugged my shoulders and smiled, and took no further notice of him. Some days afterward I left home for Paris. There, I found myself launched into the society of men of letters; their example encouraged and stimulated me, and I soon published several works that were very successful, which I will not now describe. All Paris rushed to see me, the journals were filled with my praises. The new name I had taken became celebrated, and even recently, young man, you have admired my works."

Here another gesture of surprise on my part interrupted this recital. "Then you are not the *Duc de C* * * *?" cried I.

"No," replied he, coldly. And I asked myself: "A celebrated man of letters! Is this Marmontel? is it d'Alembert? is it Voltaire?"

The unknown sighed, a smile of regret and contempt spread over his lips, and he continued his recital.

“This literary reputation, which had seemed to me so desirable, soon failed to satisfy a soul so ardent as mine. I aspired to still higher successes, and I said to Yago (who had followed me to Paris and who kept close watch over me), ‘This is not real glory, there is no veritable renown but that which one acquires in the career of arms. What is an author, a poet? Nothing! Give me a great general, or a captain in the army! Behold the destiny that I desire, and for a great military reputation I would willingly give ten more years of my life.’

“‘I accept them,’ replied Yago, quickly. ‘I take them—they belong to me—do not forget it.’”

At this stage of his recital the unknown paused once more on seeing the alarm and incredulity that were depicted on my features.

“You remember, I warned you, young man,” said he, “that you could not believe my story. It must seem to you a dream, a chimera—to me also;—nevertheless the promotions, the honors that I soon obtained, were no illusions. Those brave soldiers that I led into the thickest of the fight! Those brilliant charges! Those captured flags! Those victories which all France heard of; all that was *my* work—all that glory belonged to me!”

While he marched up and down the room with great strides, and spoke thus with warmth and with enthusiasm, astonishment and fear had almost paralyzed my senses. “Who then is this person?” thought I. “Is it Coligny? is it Richelieu? is it the Maréchal de Saxe?”

From his state of exaltation my unknown had fallen again into deepest dejection, and approaching me, said with a somber air: “Yago kept his promise; and when, later on, disgusted with the vain smoke of military glory, I aspired to that which is only real and positive in this world—when at the price of five or six years of existence I desired great riches, he gladly gave them to me. Yes, young man, I have possessed vast wealth, far beyond my wildest dreams—estates, forests, and *châteaux*. To-day, still, all this is mine, and in my power; if you doubt



me—if you doubt the existence of Yago, wait here, he is coming, and you can see for yourself that which would confound your reason and mine, were it not unfortunately too real."

The unknown approached the fire-place, looked at the time-piece, made a gesture of alarm, and said to me in a deep voice:

"This morning at daybreak I felt myself so weak and so feeble that I could scarcely rise. I rang for my *valet-de-chambre*; it was Yago who appeared. 'What is this strange feeling?' asked I.

"'Master, nothing but what is perfectly natural. The hour approaches, the moment arrives.'

"'And what is it?' cried I.

"'Can you not divine it? Heaven has destined you sixty years to live; you were thirty when I began to obey you.'

"'Yago!' cried I in affright, 'do you speak seriously?'

"'Yes, master; in five years you have spent in glory twenty-five years of life. You have sold them to me. They belong to me; and these years that you have voluntarily given up are now added to mine.'

"'What! That, then, was the price of your services?'

"'Yes, and many others (for ages past) have paid more dearly; for instance, Fabert, whom I protected also.'

"'Be silent, be silent!' cried I; 'this is not possible; it cannot be true!'

"'As you please; but prepare yourself; for there only remains for you a brief half hour of life.'

"'You are mocking me!'

"'Not at all. Calculate for yourself. Thirty-five years you have had, and twenty-five years you have sold to me—total, sixty. It is your own count; each one takes his own.' Then he wished to go away, and I felt my strength diminish. I felt my life leaving me.

"'Yago! Yago!' I cried feebly; 'give me a few hours, a few hours more!'

"'No, no,' replied he, 'it would be taking away from myself, and I know better than you the value of life. There is no treasure worth two hours of existence.'

"I could scarcely speak; my eyes were set in my head, and the chill of death congealed the blood in my veins. 'Very well!'

said I with an effort, 'take back your gifts, for that which I have sacrificed all. Four hours more and I renounce my gold, my wealth—all this opulence that I have so much desired.'

"'Be it so; you have been a good master, and I am willing to do something for you. I consent.'

"I felt my strength come back, and I cried: 'Four hours,—that is very little! Yago! Yago! Four hours more and I renounce all my literary fame, all my works that have placed me so high in the world's esteem.'

"'Four hours for that!' cried the negro with disdain; 'it is too much. No matter. I cannot refuse your last request.'

"'Not the last!' cried I, clasping my hands before him. 'Yago! Yago! I supplicate you, give me until this evening. The twelve hours, the entire day, and all my exploits, my victories, all my military renown may all be effaced from the memory of men. This day, Yago, dear Yago; this whole day, and I will be content!'

"'You abuse my kindness,' said he; 'no matter, I will give you until sunset; after that you must not ask me. This evening, then, I will come for you'—and he is gone," continued the unknown, in despairing accents—"and this day, in which I see you for the first time, is my last on earth." Then going to the glass-door, which was open, and which led to the park, he cried: "Alas! I will no longer behold the beautiful sky, these green lawns, the sparkling fountains! I will never again breathe the balmy air of spring-time. Fool that I have been! These gifts that God has given to all of us; these blessings, to which I was insensible, and of which I can only now, when it is too late, appreciate and comprehend the sweetness—and I might have enjoyed them for twenty-five years more!—and I have used up my life! I have sacrificed it for what? For a vain and sterile glory, which has not made me happy, and which dies with me! Look!" said he to me, pointing to some peasants who traversed the park, singing on their way to work. "What would I not give now, to share their labors and their poverty! But I have no longer anything to give, or to hope for here below, not even misfortune!"

Just then a ray of sunlight (the sun of the month of May) shone through the casement and lit up his pale and distracted features. He seized my arm in a sort of delirium, and said to me: "See! see there! is it not beautiful? the sun!—and I must leave all this! Ah! at least I am still alive! I will have this whole day—so pure, so bright, so radiant—this day which for me has no morrow!" he then ran down the steps of the open door, and bounded like a deer across the park, and at a detour of the path he disappeared in the shrubbery, before I hardly realized that he was gone, or could detain him. To tell the truth, I would not have had the strength. I lay

back on the couch, stunned, dazed, and weak with the shock of all I had heard. I arose and walked up and down the room, to assure myself that I was awake, that I had not been under the influence of a dream. Just then the door of the boudoir opened and a servant announced, "Here is my master, the *Duc de C****."

A man of sixty years, and of distinguished presence advanced toward me, and giving me his hand, apologized for having made me wait so long.

"I was not in the chateau. I had gone to seek my younger brother, the Comte de C***, who is ill."

"And is he in danger?" interrupted I.

"No, monsieur. Thanks to heaven," replied my host; "but in his youth ambitious dreams of glory exalted his imagination, and a serious illness that he has had recently (and which he deemed fatal) has upset his mind, and produced a sort of delirium and mental aberration, by which he persuades himself always that he has but one day to live. It is insanity."

All was explained to me.

"Now," continued the duke, "let us come to you, young man, and see what can be done for your advancement. We will depart at the end of the month for Versailles. I will present you at court."

I blushed and replied. "I appreciate your kindness *Monsieur le duc*, and I thank you very much; but, I will not go to Versailles."

"What! would you renounce the court and all the advantages and promotions which certainly await you there?"

"Yes Monsieur——"

"But do you realize, that with my influence you can rise rapidly, and that with a little assiduity and patience you can become distinguished in ten years?"

"Ten years lost!" I cried in terror.

"What!" replied he, astonished. "Ten years is not much to pay for fortune, glory and honors? Come, come, my young friend. Come with me to Versailles."

"No, *Monsieur le duc*. I am determined to return to Brittany, and I beg of you to receive my profound gratitude, and that of my family."

"What folly!" cried he.

And I, remembering what I had listened to, said: "It is wisdom!"

The next day I was *en route*, and with what exquisite delight did I behold my beautiful chateau of Roche-Bernard, the grand old trees in my park, and the bright sunshine of Brittany. I found again my vassals, my mother, my sisters, my fiancée, and my happiness, which I still retain, for one week later I married Henriette.



GENERAL HOUSEWORK

BY MRS. OREL ORVIS

An amusing monologue. Written for Short Stories—Copyrighted.

“Yes, sum, I’s de young pusson wot ans’e’d yoh ’tisement foh a young cullud gu-ul to do gen’l housewu-uk.

“How ole is I? Well, I can’ tell ‘zack’ly, but I guess I mus’ be as much as twenty-two or free yeahs ole; I was bawn on Massa Gwynne’s plantation befo’ de wah.

“Refrence? No, I ‘ain’ got no refrence; I’s bin ‘gittin de powah’ ‘mos ebry summah since de wah, an goin’ roun’ to de differen’ camp meetin’s an ‘vivals. I’s jus’ come in from Rasberry Pahk.

“Cookin? Well, no; I can’ say as I knows much about cookin’. You see ole Mammy used to do de cookin, an when she stahted in to cook she didn’t want none ub us pickaninies roun de kitchen, use to clar us all out big and little. Sometimes she’d let us shell de peas or beat de Marylan’ biscuits, or skim de rasberry jam, if it was too hot foh us to eat. She use to let me stem de gooseberries allus, aftah one time I done eat so many in a hurry, dat I took a fit; an’ de whites ob my eyes tuhned green, an streaked, jus’ like gooseberries when I rolled em up. Ole Missy tole me so herself, an’ aftah dat, I nebbah eat no mo’ gooseberries.

“Washin’ an irnin? No, I nebbber done no washin’ an irnin’. Aunt Amy she use’ to do de washin’ an’ she’d gib me a good dose o’ suds if I cum aroun’ her. Clementina, she use to help wid de irinin an’ flutin’, an’ she’d starch her own petticoats ‘til dey’d stan’ alone.

“Chambah wu-uk? No, I nebbber done no chambah wu-uk. I use to git a chance to git in de bedrooms once in a while from de balcony, an’ look at myself in de big mirrahs, an’ see de laces an’ jewelry, an put a little ‘fumery on myself, but Clementina she done de chambah wu-uk, an’ whenebber I done heah her petticoats rattlin’ along de hall, I didn’ wait.

“Waitin’ at table? No, I nebbber waited at table any more’n to fan de flies off’n it sometimes, an wait on de verandah wid de res’ ob de little nigs at dinnah time to see if ole Massa

wouldn' frow us some goodies. Sometimes Noah'd save us some. Noah allus waited at table.

"Ca-ah ob chillun? I nebbah had no ca-ah ob chillun. Dah wa'ant nobody goin' to trust de white chillun to me, an de cullud chillun took ca-ah ob deyselves.

"Once I did take ca-ah ob young Massa Bud in de gahdin, while his Loosianny French nurse was a talkin ober de hedge to de valet ob a gemmun on de nex plantation; but Massa Bud an me bofe put so much green currants up our nose, dat dey had to tuhn me upside down an shake em out o'me, an de doctah had to cut Massa Bud's nose open on de side, to git one ob em out. Ebery once in a while now-a-days, I goes down to see him at de Stock Exchange, an he laughs an gibs me fi' dollahs-an points to a little scah side his nose an' says, 'Dat's foh de scah, Lucindah.'

"What *did* I do? Well, I use to fan de flies off ole Missy while she was takin' huh aftahnoon nap, an keep watch on de lawn to see if dah was company comin' up de road, an run an tell de young ladies so dey could git dey're hah out ob cu-ul papahs, sides all I'se tole you, an' dats about all I'se done; but I'se powahful fond ob gen'l housewu-uk, I is."



RAB AND HIS FRIENDS

BY JOHN BROWN, M. D.

Famous Story Series

One of the most famous and pathetic of short stories.

Four-and-thirty years ago, Bob Ainslie and I were coming up Infirmary Street from the Edinburgh High School, our heads together, and our arms intertwisted, as only lovers and boys know how or why.

When we got to the top of the street, and turned north, we espied a crowd at the Tron Church. "A dog-fight!" shouted Bob, and was off; and so was I, both of us all but praying that it might not be over before we got up. And is not this boy-nature? and human nature too? and don't we all wish a house on fire not to be out before we see it? Dogs like fighting; old Isaac says they "delight" in it, and for the best of all reasons; and boys are not cruel because they like to see the fight. They see three of the great cardinal virtues of dog or man—courage, endurance, and skill—in intense action. This is very different from the love of making dogs fight; and enjoying, and aggravating, and making gain by their pluck. A boy, be he ever so fond himself of fighting, if he be a good boy, hates and despises all this; but he would have run off with Bob and me fast enough. It is a natural, and a not wicked interest, that all boys and men have in witnessing intense energy in action.

Does any curious and finely ignorant woman wish to know how Bob's eye at a glance announced a dog-fight to his brain? He did not, he could not see the dogs fighting; it was a flash of an inference, a rapid induction. The crowd around a dog-fight is a crowd masculine mainly, with an occasional active, compassionate woman, fluttering wildly round the outside, and using her tongue and her hands freely upon the men, as so many "brutes"; it is a crowd annular, compact, and mobile; a crowd centripetal, having its eyes and its heads all bent downwards and inwards, to one common focus.

Well, Bob and I are up, and find it is not over; a small thoroughbred, white bull-terrier is busy throttling a large shepherd's dog, unaccustomed to war, but not to be trifled

with. They are hard at it; the scientific little fellow doing his work in great style, his pastoral enemy fighting wildly, but with the sharpest of teeth and a great courage. Science and breeding, however, soon had their own; the Game Chicken, as the premature Bob called him, working his way up, took his final grip of poor Yarrow's throat,—and he lay gasping and done for. His master, a brown, handsome, big young shepherd from Tweedsmuir, would have liked to have knocked down any man, would “drink up Esil, or eat a crocodile,” for that part, if he had a chance; it was no use kicking the little dog, that would only make him hold the closer. Many were the means shouted out in mouthfuls, of the best possible ways of ending it. “Water!” but there was none near, and many cried for it who might have got it from the well at Blackfriars Wynd. “Bite the tail!” and a large, vague, benevolent, middle-aged man, more desirous than wise, with some struggle got the bushy end of Yarrow's tail into his ample mouth, and bit it with all his might. This was more than enough for the much-enduring, much perspiring shepherd, who, with a gleam of joy over his broad visage, delivered a terrific facer upon our large, vague, benevolent, middle-aged friend,—who went down like a shot.

Still the Chicken holds; death not far off. “Snuff! a pinch of snuff!” observed a calm, highly-dressed young buck, with an eye-glass in his eye. “Snuff, indeed!” growled the angry crowd, affronted and glaring. “Snuff! a pinch of snuff!” again observes the buck, with more urgency; whereupon were produced several open boxes, and from a mull which may have been at Culloden, he took a pinch, knelt down, and presented it to the nose of the Chicken. The laws of physiology and of snuff take their course; the Chicken sneezes, and Yarrow is free!

The young pastoral giant stalks off with Yarrow in his arms, comforting him.

But the bull-terrier's blood is up, and his soul unsatisfied; he grips the first dog he meets, and discovering she is not a dog in Homeric phrase, he makes a brief sort of *amende*, and is off. The boys, with Bob and me at their head, are after him: down Niddry Street he goes bent on mischief; up the Cowgate like an arrow—Bob and I, and our small men, panting behind.

There, under the single arch of the South Bridge is a huge

mastiff, sauntering down the middle of the causeway, as if with his hands in his pockets: he is old, gray, and brindled, as big as a little Highland bull, and has the Shakespearian dew-laps shaking as he goes.

The Chicken makes straight at him, and fastens on his throat. To our astonishment the great creature does nothing but stand still, hold himself up, and roar—yes, roar; a long serious, remonstrative roar. How is this? Bob and I are up to them. *He is muzzled!* The bailies had proclaimed a general muzzling, and his master, studying strength and economy mainly, had encompassed his huge jaws in a home-made apparatus, constructed out of the leather of some ancient breeching. His mouth was open as far as it could; his lips curled up in rage—a sort of terrible grin; his teeth gleaming, ready, from out the darkness; the strap across his mouth tense as a bowstring; his whole frame stiff with indignation and surprise; his roar asking us all round, “Did you ever see the like of this?” He looked a statue of anger and astonishment, done in Aberdeen granite.

We soon had a crowd: the Chicken held on. “A knife!” cried Bob; and a cobbler gave him his knife; you know the kind of knife, worn away obliquely to a point, and always keen. I put its edge to the tense leather; it ran before it; and then!—one sudden jerk of that enormous head, a sort of dirty mist about his mouth, no noise, and the bright and fierce little fellow is dropped limp and dead. A solemn pause; this was more than any of us had bargained for. I turned the little fellow over, and saw he was quite dead; the mastiff had taken him by the small of the back like a rat, and broken it.

He looked down at his victim appeased, ashamed, and amazed; snuffed him all over, stared at him, and, taking a sudden thought, turned round and trotted off. Bob took the dead dog up, and said, “John, we’ll bury him after tea.” “Yes,” said I, and was off after the mastiff. He made up the Cowgate at a rapid swing; he had forgotten some engagement. He turned up the Candlemaker Row, and stopped at the Harrow Inn.

There was a carrier’s cart ready to start, and a keen, thin, impatient, black-a-vised little man, his hand at his gray horse’s head, looking about angrily for something.

“Rab, ye thief!” said he, aiming a kick at my great friend,

who drew cringing up, and avoiding the heavy shoe with more agility than dignity, and watching his master's eye, slunk dismayed under the cart,—his ears down, and as much as he had of tail down too.

What a man this must be,—thought I,—to whom my tremendous hero turns tail! The carrier saw the muzzle hanging, cut and useless, from his neck, and I eagerly told him the story, which Bob and I always thought, and still think, Homer, or King David, or Sir Walter alone worthy to rehearse. The severe little man was mitigated, and condescended to say, “Rab, my man, *puir* Rabbie!”—where-upon the stump of a tail rose up, the ears were cocked, the eyes filled, and were comforted; the two friends were reconciled. “Hupp!” and a stroke of the whip were given to Jess; and off went the three.

Bob and I buried the Game Chicken that night (we had not much of a tea) in the back-green of his house in Melville Street, No. 17, with considerable gravity and silence; and being at the time in the *Iliad*, and, like all boys, Trojans, we called him Hector, of course.

Six years have passed,—a long time for a boy and a dog; Bob Ainslie is off to the wars; I am a medical student, and clerk at Minto House Hospital.

Rab I saw almost every week, on the Wednesday; and we had much pleasant intimacy. I found the way to his heart by frequent scratching of his huge head, and an occasional bone. When I did not notice him he would plant himself straight before me, and stand wagging that bud of a tail, and looking up, with his head a little to one side. His master I occasionally saw; he used to call me “Maister John,” but was laconic as any Spartan.

One fine October afternoon, I was leaving the hospital, when I saw the large gate open and in walked Rab, with that great and easy saunter of his. He looked as if taking general possession of the place; like the Duke of Wellington entering a subdued city, satiated with victory and peace. After him came Jess, now white with age, with her cart; and in it a woman, carefully wrapped up,—the carrier leading the horse anxiously, and looking back. When he saw me, James (for his name was James Noble) made a curt and grotesque “boo” and said, “Maister John, this is the mistress; she’s

got trouble in her breest,—some kind o' an income, we're thinkin'."

By this time I saw the woman's face; she was sitting on a sack filled with straw, her husband's plaid around her, and his big-coat with its large white metal buttons, over her feet.

I never saw a more unforgettable face—pale, serious, lonely, delicate, sweet, without being at all what we call fine. She looked sixty, and had on a mutch, white as snow, with its black ribbon; her silvery, smooth hair setting off her dark-gray eyes—eyes such as one sees only twice or thrice in a lifetime, full of suffering, full also of the overcoming of it; her eyebrows black and delicate, and her mouth firm, patient and contented, which few mouths ever are.

As I have said, I never saw a more beautiful countenance, or one more subdued to settled quiet.

"Ailie," said James, "this is Maister John, the young doctor; Rab's freend, ye ken. We often speak aboot you, doctor." She smiled, and made a movement, but said nothing; and prepared to come down, putting her plaid aside and rising. Had Solomon, in all his glory, been handing down the Queen of Sheba at his palace gate, he could not have done it more daintily, more tenderly, more like a gentleman, than did James the Howgate carrier, when he lifted down Ailie his wife. The contrast of his small, swarthy, weather-beaten, keen, worldly face to hers—pale, subdued and beautiful—was something wonderful. Rab looked on concerned and puzzled, but ready for anything that might turn up, were it to strangle the nurse, the porter, or even me. Ailie and he seemed to be great friends.

"As I was sayin', she's got a kind o' trouble in her breest, doctor; wull ye tak' a look at it?" We walked into the consulting-room, all four; Rab grim and comic, willing to be happy and confidential if cause could be shown, willing also to be the reverse, on the same terms. Ailie sat down, undid her open gown and her lawn handkerchief round her neck, and without a word showed me her right breast. I looked at and examined it carefully, she and James watching me, and Rab eyeing all three. What could I say? there it was, that had once been so soft, so shapely, so white, so gracious and bountiful, so "full of all blessed conditions,"—hard as a stone, a centre of horrid pain, making that pale face, with its gray, lucid, reasonable eyes, and its sweet, resolved mouth,

express the full measure of suffering overcome. Why was that gentle, modest, sweet woman, clean and lovable, condemned by God to bear such a burden?

I got her away to bed. "May Rab and me bide?" said James. "You may; and Rab, if he will behave himself." "I'se warrant he's do that, doctor;" and in slunk the faithful beast. I wish you could have seen him. There are no such dogs now. He belonged to a lost tribe. As I have said, he was brindled and gray like Rubislaw granite; his hair, short, hard, and close, like a lion's; his body thick-set, like a little bull, a sort of compressed Hercules of a dog. He must have been ninety pounds' weight, at the least; he had a large blunt head; his muzzle black as night; his mouth blacker than any night, a tooth or two, being all he had, gleaming out of his jaws of darkness. His head was scarred with the records of old wounds, a sort of series of fields of battle all over it; one eye out, one ear cropped as close as was Archbishop Leighton's father's; the remaining eye had the power of two; and above it, and in constant communication with it, was a tattered rag of an ear, which was forever unfurling itself, like an old flag; and then that bud of a tail, about one inch long, if it could in any sense be said to be long, being as broad as long, the mobility, the instantaneousness of that bud were very funny and surprising, and its expressive twinklings and winkings, the intercommunications between the eye, the ear, and it, were of the oddest and swiftest.

Rab had the dignity and simplicity of great size; and having fought his way all along the road to absolute supremacy, he was as mighty in his own line as Julius Cæsar or the Duke of Wellington, and had the gravity of all great fighters.

You must have often observed the likeness of certain men to certain animals, and of certain dogs to men. Now, I never looked at Rab without thinking of the great Baptist preacher, Andrew Fuller. The same large, heavy, menacing, combative, sombre, honest countenance, the same deep inevitable eye, the same look, as of thunder asleep, but ready; neither a dog nor a man to be trifled with.

Next day, my master, the surgeon, examined Ailie. There was no doubt it must kill her, and soon. It could be removed—it might never return—it would give her speedy

relief, she should have it done. She curtsied, looked at James, and said, "When?" "To-morrow," said the kind surgeon, a man of few words. She and James and Rab and I retired. I noticed that he and she spoke little, but seemed to anticipate everything in each other. The following day, at noon, the students came in, hurrying up the great stair. At the first landing-place, on a small, well-known blackboard, was a bit of paper fastened by wafers, and many remains of old wafers beside it. On the paper were the words, "An operation to-day. J. B., *Clerk.*"

Up ran the youths, eager to secure good places; in they crowded, full of interest and talk. "What's the case?" "Which side is it?"

Don't think them heartless; they are neither better nor worse than you or I; they get over their professional horrors, and into their proper work—and in them pity, as an emotion, ending in itself or at best in tears and a long-drawn 'breath, lessens, while pity as a motive is quickened, and gains power and purpose. It is well for human nature that it is so.

The operating theatre is crowded; much talk and fun and all the cordiality and stir of youth. The surgeon with his staff of assistants is there. In comes Ailie; one look at her quiets and abates the eager students. That beautiful old woman is too much for them; they sit down and are dumb, and gaze at her. These rough boys feel the power of her presence. She walks in quickly, but without haste; dressed in her mutch, her neckerchief, her white dimity short gown, her black bombazine petticoat, showing white worsted stockings and her carpet-shoes. Behind her was James with Rab. James sat down in the distance, and took that huge and noble head between his knees. Rab looked perplexed and dangerous; forever cocking his ear and dropping it as fast.

Ailie stepped up on a seat, and laid herself on the table, as her friend, the surgeon told her; arranged herself, gave a rapid look at James, shut her eyes, rested herself on me, and took my hand. The operation was at once begun; it was necessarily slow; and chloroform—one of God's best gifts to his suffering children—was then unknown. The surgeon did his work. The pale face showed its pain, but was still and silent. Rab's soul was working within him; he saw that something strange was going on—blood flowing from his

mistress, and she suffering; his ragged ear was up, and importunate; he growled, and gave now and then a sharp, impatient yelp; he would have liked to have done something to that man. But James had him firm, and gave him a glower from time to time, and an intimation of a possible kick—all the better for James, it kept his eye and his mind off Ailie.

It is over; she is dressed, steps gently and decently down from the table, looks for James; then turning to the surgeon and the students, she curtsies—and in a low, clear voice, begs their pardon if she has behaved ill. The students—all of us—wept like children; the surgeon hopped her up carefully—and, resting on James and me, Ailie went to her room, Rab following. We put her to bed. James took off his heavy shoes, crammed with tackets, heel-capt and toe-capt, and put them carefully under the table, saying, “Maister John, I’m for nane o’ yer strange nurse bodies for Ailie. I’ll be her nurse, and I’ll gang about on my stockin’ soles as canny as pussy.” And so he did; and handy and clever, and swift and tender as any woman, was that horny-handed, snell, peremptory little man. Everything she got he gave her; he seldom slept; and often I saw his small shrewd eyes out of the darkness fixed on her. As before, they spoke little.

Rab behaved well, never moving, showing us how meek and gentle he could be, and occasionally in his sleep, letting us know that he was demolishing some adversary. He took a walk with me every day, generally to the Candlemaker Row; but he was sombre and mild; declined doing battle, though some fit cases offered, and indeed submitted to sundry indignities; and was always very ready to turn, and came faster back, and trotted up the stair with much lightness, and went straight to that door.

Jess, the mare, had been sent, with her weather-worn cart, to Howgate, and had doubtless her own dim and placid meditations and confusions, on the absence of her master and Rab, and her unnatural freedom from the road and her cart.

For some days Ailie did well. The wound healed “by the first intention;” for, as James said, “Oor Ailie’s skin, ower clean to beil.” The students came in quiet and anxious, and surrounded her bed. She said she liked to see their young, honest faces. The surgeon dressed her, and spoke to her in his own short, kind way, pitying her through his eyes, Rab

and James outside the circle,—Rab being now reconciled, and even cordial, and having made up his mind that as yet nobody required worrying, but, as you may suppose, *semper paratus*.

So far well: but, four days after the operation, my patient had a sudden and long shivering, a “groossin’,” as she called it. I saw her soon after; her eyes were too bright, her cheek colored; she was restless, and ashamed of being so; the balance was lost; mischief had begun. On looking at the wound, a blush of red told the secret: her pulse was rapid, her breathing anxious and quick; she wasn’t herself, as she said, and was vexed at her restlessness. We tried what we could. James did everything, was everywhere; never in the way, never out of it; Rab subsided under the table into a dark place, and was motionless, all but his eye, which followed everyone. Ailie got worse; began to wander in her mind, gently; was more demonstrative in her ways to James, rapid in her questions, and sharp at times. He was vexed, and said, “She was never that way afore; no, never.” For a time she knew her head was wrong, and was always asking our pardon,—the dear, gentle old woman: then delirium set in strong, without pause. Her brain gave way, and then came that terrible spectacle—

“The intellectual power, through words and things,
Went sounding on its dim and perilous way;”

she sang bits of old songs and Psalms, stopping suddenly, mingling the Psalms of David and the diviner words of his Son and Lord with homely odds and ends and scraps of ballads.

Nothing more touching, or in a sense more strangely beautiful, did I ever witness. Her tremulous, rapid, affectionate, eager Scotch voice,—the swift, aimless, bewildered mind, the baffled utterance, the bright and perilous eye; some wild words, some household cares, something for James, the names of the dead, Rab called rapidly in a “fremyt” voice, and he starting up surprised, and slinking off as if he were to blame somehow, or had been dreaming he heard; many eager questions and beseechings which James and I could make nothing of, and on which she seemed to set her all, and then sink back understood. It was very sad, but better than many things that are not called sad. James hovered about, put out and miserable, but active and exact as ever; read to her, when there was a lull, short bits of the Psalms, prose and

metre, chanting the latter in his own rude and serious way, showing great knowledge of the fit words, bearing up like a man, and doating over her as his "ain Ailie." "Ailie, ma woman!" "Ma ain bonnie wee dawtie!"

The end was drawing on; the golden bowl was breaking; the silver cord was fast being loosed—that *animula blandula, vagula, hospes, comesque*, was about to flee. The body and the soul—companions for sixty years—were being sundered, and taking leave. She was walking alone through the valley of that shadow into which one day we must all enter—and yet she was not alone, for we know whose rod and staff were comforting her.

One night she had fallen quiet, and, as we hoped, asleep; her eyes were shut. We put down the gas, and sat watching her. Suddenly she sat up in bed, and taking a bed-gown which was lying on it rolled up, she held it eagerly to her breast—to the right side. We could see her eyes bright with a surprising tenderness and joy, bending over this bundle of clothes. She held it as a woman holds her sucking child; opening out her night-gown impatiently, and holding it close, and brooding over it, and murmuring foolish little words, as over one whom his mother comforteth, and who sucks and is satisfied. It was pitiful and strange to see her wasted dying look, keen and yet vague—her immense love.

"Preserve me!" groaned James, giving way. And then she rocked back and forward, as if to make it sleep, hushing it, and wasting on it her infinite fondness. "Wae's me doctor; I declare she's thinkin' it's that bairn." "What bairn?" "The only bairn we ever had; our wee Mysie, and she's in the Kingdom, forty years and mair." It was telling plainly true: the pain in the breast, telling its urgent story to a bewildered, ruined brain, was misread and mistaken; it suggested to her the uneasiness of a breast full of milk, and then the child; and so again once more they were together, and she had her ain wee Mysie in her bosom.

This was the close. She sank rapidly: the delirium left her; but, as she whispered, she was "clean silly;" it was the lightening before the final darkness. After having for some time lain still, her eyes shut, she said: "James!" He came close to her, and lifting up her calm, clear, beautiful eyes, she gave him a long look, turned to me kindly but shortly, looked for Rab but could not see him, then turned to her

husband again, as if she would never leave off looking, shut her eyes, and composed herself. She lay for some time breathing quick, and passed away so gently, that when we thought she was gone, James, in his old-fashioned way, held the mirror to her face. After a long pause, one small spot of dimness was breathed out; it vanished away and never returned, leaving the blank clear darkness of the mirror without a stain. "What is our life? It is even a vapor, which appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away."

Rab all this time had been fully awake and motionless; he came forward beside us: Ailie's hand, which James had held, was hanging down; it was soaked with his tears; Rab licked it all over, carefully looked at her, and returned to his place under the table.

James and I sat, I don't know how long, but for some time, saying nothing: he started up abruptly, and with some noise went to the table, and putting his right fore and middle fingers each into a shoe, pulled them out, and put them on, breaking one of the leather latches, and muttering in anger, "I never did the like o' that afore!"

I believe he never did; nor after either. "Rab!" he said roughly, and pointing with his thumb to the bottom of the bed. Rab leapt up, and settled himself; his head and eye to the dead face. "Maister John, ye'll wait for me," said the carrier; and disappeared in the darkness, thundering downstairs in his heavy shoes. I ran to the front window; there he was, already round the house, and out at the gate, fleeing like a shadow.

I was afraid about him, and yet not afraid; so I sat down beside Rab, and being wearied, fell asleep. I woke from a sudden noise outside. It was November, and there had been a heavy fall of snow. Rab was *in statu quo*; he heard the noise too, and plainly knew it, but never moved. I looked out; and there at the gate, in the dim morning—for the sun was not up—was Jess and the cart—a cloud of steam rising from the old mare. I did not see James; he was already at the door, and came up the stairs, and met me. It was less than three hours since he left, and he must have posted out—who knows how—to Howgate, full nine miles off, yoked Jess and driven her astonished into town. He had an armful of blankets, and was streaming with perspiration. He nodded to me, spread out on the floor two pairs of clean old blankets

having at their corners, "A. G., 1794," in large letters in red worsted. These were the initials of Alison Graeme, and James may have looked in at her from without—himself unseen but not unthought of—when he was, "wat, wat, and weary," and after having walked many a mile over the hills, may have seen her sitting, while "a' the lave were sleepin';" and by the firelight working her name on the blankets, for her ain James' bed.

He motioned Rab down, and taking his wife in his arms, laid her in the blankets, and happed her carefully and firmly up, leaving the face uncovered; and then lifting her, he nodded again sharply to me, and with a resolved but utterly miserable face strode along the passage and downstairs, followed by Rab. I followed with a light; but he didn't need it. I went out, holding stupidly the candle in my hand in the calm frosty air; we were soon at the gate. I could have helped him, but I saw he was not to be meddled with, and he was strong, and did not need it. He laid her down as tenderly, as safely, as he had lifted her out ten days before—as tenderly as when he had her first in his arms when she was only "A. G."—sorted her, leaving that beautiful sealed face open to the heavens; and then taking Jess by the head, he moved away. He did not notice me, neither did Rab, who presided behind the cart. I stood till they passed through the long shadow of the College, and turned up Nicolson Street. I heard the solitary cart sound through the streets, and die away and come again; and I returned, thinking of that company going up Libberton Brae, then along Roslin Muir, the morning light touching the Pentlands and making them like on-looking ghosts; then down the hill through Auchindinny Woods, past "haunted Woodhouselee"; and as daybreak came sweeping up the bleak Lammermuirs, and fell on his own door, the company would stop, and James would take the key, and lift Ailie up again, laying her on her own bed, and, having put Jess up, would return with Rab and shut the door.

James buried his wife, with his neighbors mourning, Rab inspecting the solemnity from a distance. There was snow, and that black ragged hole would look strange in the midst of the swelling spotless cushion of white. James looked after everything; then rather suddenly fell ill, and took to bed; was in-

sensible when the doctor came, and soon died. A sort of low fever was prevailing in the village, and his want of sleep, his exhaustion, and his misery made him apt to take it. The grave was not difficult to re-open. A fresh fall of snow had again made all things white and smooth; Rab once more looked on, and slunk home to the stable.

And what of Rab? I asked for him next week at the new carrier who got the good-will of James' business, and was now master of Jess and her cart. "How's Rab?" He put me off, and said rather rudely, "What's *your* business wi' the dowg?" I was not to be so put off. "Where's Rab?" He, getting confused and red, and intermeddling with his hair, said, "'Deed, sir, Rab's deid." "Dead! what did he die of?" "Weel, sir," said he, getting redder, "he didna exactly dee; he was killed. I had to brain him wi' a rack-pin; there was nae doin' wi' him. He lay in the treviss wi' the mear, and wadna come oot. I temptit him wi' kail and meat, but he wad tak naething, and keepit me frae feedin' the beast, and he was aye gur gurrin', and grup gruppin' me by the legs. I was laith to make awa wi' the auld dowg, his like wasna atween this and Thornhill—but, 'deed, sir, I could do naething else."

I believed him. Fit end for Rab, quick and complete. His teeth and his friends gone, why should he keep the peace, and be civil?





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was born, so that she was alone in the world and quite desolate. All her love, therefore, centred upon this child, and, clad as she was in widow's weeds, she clasped it fondly in her arms.

On the third day after its birth three fairies, who greatly commiserated her, came to visit her, and seeing how beautiful the infant was, and how much the mother loved it, they promised it three good gifts.

The first fairy, touching it with her golden wand, said: "The day that she is twelve years old a rose shall fall from her mouth every time she laughs."



The second fairy then touched it with her golden wand: "The day that she is twelve years old," she said, "every time she weeps, pearls shall fall from her eyes."

And lastly, the third fairy—with her golden wand—also

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touched her, saying: "Before your eighteenth year has passed, a prince shall marry you, and you shall become a princess."

The mother listened to all these promises, and her heart rejoiced exceedingly. She was very, very poor, but she brought up her daughter as well as she could until she was twelve years of age. The evening of the day on which she had completed her twelfth year, the girl laughed right out with joy at something which her mother had said, and immediately the first rose fell from

FIRST FAIRY her lips, and when the mother saw it, she remembered all that the fairies had promised, and her motherly heart rejoiced, for she said: "If one promise be fulfilled, the others will surely follow in their turn."

The girl was graceful, beautiful and blithe, and the roses fell from her mouth like rain. The mother, without having the trouble to gather roses, put them all into a basket, and took them to the town and sold them. With the money thus obtained she and the daughter lived—frugally certainly, but nevertheless more comfortably than heretofore. So time went on.

It was winter, and the queen was going to give a great ball at the palace. She had a beautiful gown, and it was rose color, so she wanted to have real roses on her head and at her breast to wear with it. She therefore ordered the royal gardener to bring her some; but he said that so much snow had fallen that all the roses were spoilt, and that he could not find even one. The queen was very angry at this, and told him straightway that she did not believe him, but that he preferred to leave them to perish in the royal garden, adding that she should go and **SECOND FAIRY** seek for herself another gardener, and dismiss him forthwith.

The poor gardener sighed upon hearing this, and went to look at every garden far and near to see if he could possibly find any roses; but he found none. In the course of his

wanderings he happened to pass by the cottage in which dwelt the poor woman and her daughter.

The gardener was so bewildered by his anxiety that he did not look to see where he was going, and never observing a stone that was lying before the cottage, he stumbled over it and fell down. There was something comical in the way in which he fell, for he did not hurt himself, but his fez rolled off his head into the mud and got dirtied.

The girl, who was looking out of the window, could not help laughing when she saw the gardener fall, and down dropped a rose from her mouth and fell into the road right in front of the gardener. When she saw what had occurred she felt a little bit ashamed, and drew back to hide herself, but the gardener, as soon as he saw it, never stayed to pick up his fez, but ran quickly to seize the rose. He could not believe his own eyes. How did it come there?

THIRD FAIRY

Perhaps it was done by magic. Anyhow, it was a real and beautiful rose, and smelt better than those of April. But one rose was of no use for the queen. He must have ten, and where could he find the others?

Since, however, it had fallen just in front of that house, the people who lived there might know something about it. "Anyhow, I'll knock," he said to himself.

So without any more ado he knocked at the door, which the mother immediately opened. "Well, my good man what do you want?" she asked.

And then he told her all about the queen and the ball, and how he had suddenly found a rose outside her house, when he was almost in a state of despair. After the mother heard all this, she said: "Take this one then, and go to the queen, and tell her, that there is only one rose-tree which is able to produce such roses, and that on the day of the ball I will cut some, and take her as many as she desires."

The gardener immediately went to the queen with the one rose, and told her what the woman had said, whereat the queen was greatly overjoyed. She put the rose into her bosom, and it filled the whole palace with its scent.

When the day of the ball arrived, the queen ordered the

gardener to fetch both the woman and the roses, and about noon the mother arrived at the palace, bringing with her a covered basket, and after she had saluted her Majesty, she uncovered it and presented the roses to her.

No sooner had the queen seen them than she was so delighted that she embraced and kissed the poor woman warmly. There were ten dozen in the basket, and what roses! each was more beautiful than the other.

"Madam," said the queen, "I have a favor to ask of you.

Sell me the rose-tree which bears these roses.
I will give you whatever you may demand
for it."

! But the mother answered; "Much honored queen, I cannot do this with my rose-tree. I cannot sell it. Only one thing I can do, if you are willing. You have a prince, and I will bestow it on the prince, to have it for his own, and to keep it honored and loved as if it were a living princess."

"Your wish shall be granted, madam, so that we may only have the rose-tree in the palace; and you may come with it, and live near us also."

"I have no wish for that, your Majesty. My rose-tree is the only thing I care for. I wish that to be happy, for it is all I have to love in the world. Swear to me, by the life of your son, that it shall be as you say."

"I swear to you by the life of my only son, that the tree which brings forth these roses shall be honored in this palace as if it were a real living princess."

"May God grant you a long life, my queen. Come by yourself to-morrow, and take away the rose-tree from my house."

The ball took place in the palace that evening, and all wondered at the queen's roses. Where had she found them? It was quite a marvel! Such flowers in the middle of winter.

The next morning the queen lost no time before going to secure the rose-tree. When the prince heard of the agreement which his mother had made with the woman, he jumped for joy, and got a golden vase ready in the palace in which the rose-tree was to be planted. The queen and prince went together in a gold chariot, and stopping before the humble cottage where the mother and daughter dwelt, they

alighted. The mother had mentioned nothing to her daughter, except that the queen kindly intended to come in person to thank her for the gift of roses.

As soon as the mother and daughter went out to receive the royal visitors, the daughter, as she bent down to kiss the queen's hand, smiled merely from a grateful feeling, and a rose fell from her mouth. The queen at first did not understand how this came to pass; but the prince ran immediately to pick it up to give to his mother, and the girl beholding him, smiled again in her great joy, when the second rose fell.

At one and the same moment the queen and the prince understood it all. The queen became very angry, because she remembered directly that she was bound by her oath to receive the girl as a daughter-in-law. She turned, however, to look at her again, when she saw that the girl was really so very beautiful and so very good, that without a moment's longer reserve she threw her arms around her, saying aloud as she kissed her: "You are a poor girl no longer, but a princess henceforth. You shall come and live in our palace, you and your mother also."

"Now that it has all turned out exactly as you wished it," she added, addressing the mother, "tell me, lady co-mother-in-law, how your daughter acquired so great a charm as to shower roses from her mouth whenever she laughs."

The mother immediately told her all about the fairies and their three promised gifts to her daughter, when she was an infant, and how the first and the last promise had both come true.

"The second has not taken place then," said the queen with some curiosity, "how was it that did not happen? for, poor as you were, had pearls fallen from her eyes you could have sold them."

"That did not happen," answered the mother, "because I never made her weep; I sought only to see her happy and smiling, preferring to live poor in my daughter's gladness than to become rich by her grief."

When the queen heard these words she embraced and

kissed her, saying: "You have, indeed, been a good mother; and it is an honor to a queen to make you her co-mother-in-law."

The girl, who had listened to all that her mother had said, was now so overcome by her emotion, that her eyes filled with tears, and two large pearls rolled down. The prince stooped to pick them up.

"These are not tears of sorrow," he said; "they are tears of joy. I will take them and have them made into ear-rings, and you shall wear them on the day on which you become my princess."

KATE DALRYMPLE

BY AMELIA E. BARR

Love and family pride are the themes of this pretty and amusing tale, selected from "Mrs. Barr's Short Stories," published by Robert Bonner's Sons.

There used to stand in the upper part of Glasgow a handsome mansion, with fine stone balconies and a very beautiful garden. It has been pulled down now, to make room for an ugly row of shops and flats, but in my youth it retained a sylvan appearance and many a pleasant memory of Provost Thomas Dalrymple who built it.

He governed "the good city" toward the close of that wretched period of English history which culminated in 1832, in the passing of the Reform Bill. But in spite of hard times lasting for nearly half a century, he had made money. His official position and his handsome dwelling showed that; and he had many more proofs of it in fine trading vessels, city property and bank stocks.

Of all his wealth his daughter Kate was sole heiress. A very pretty heiress indeed! Slightly willful and romantic, but, upon the whole, just as good as she was rich and pretty.

One evening, as far back as the winter of 1830, she sat chatting with her father over the walnuts and sherry. She looked unusually handsome, for she was a girl who understood contrasts and effects, and her black satin and white lace and crimson slippers had been thoughtfully put on. The provost was pleased and happy, and had just returned from a rather mysterious journey, about which Kate was curious. But she was too wise to show her curiosity; her father would be certain to tell her in his own time and way.

So the young girl admired her feet, sipped her wine, and waited, and the provost sat looking into the fire, and thoughtfully stirring the grace-cup of toddy he had just mixed.

"Take a thimbleful, Kitty," he said; "I have a great toast for you to drink—one that hasna been drunk in this house sin' the foundations o' it were laid: Here's to the Dalrymples o' Dairg!"

Kitty did as she was requested, supplementing the new toast with her usual one:

"Here's to you and me, father! Who's like us?"

"The twa are ane, lassie. You'll hae heard o' the Dalrymples o' Daирg?"

"How should I? Has any one written a book about them?"

"There hae been many books written for less matter; but, howsome'er, I have just been at Daирg. The laird is dying, and we hae been ill frien's for twenty-sax years, but we are brithers for a' that's come and gane."

There were tears in the provost's eyes, and Kate drew close to him and took his hand between hers. This proof of sympathy was all he needed; indeed, he had much to say to Kate, and was glad to have so early an opportunity to say it.

"Yes, Fergus and I quarreled twenty-sax years syne, anent Miss Grace Kirkconnell, and I left Daирg wi' £50 i' my pouch, thinking to just ga awa' to some o' the colonies. But I fell in wi' luck folks and met a bonnie English lassie, and just bided i' St. Mungo's city, where I hae been blessed i' basket and i' store—praise be where praise is due! Twa weeks syne Fergus sent for me; he is dying now, and there is much to settle anent the affairs o' the House o' Dalrymple, for he is poor, Kate, and I am rich. We made a solemn paction 'tween us twa, and you maun do your share, lassie; for, before a' ither things, the House o' Dalrymple must keep its head high."

"It has done nothing for you, father; why should you prop it?"

"You'll never let me hear you speak words like them again. You'll never forget the brave men and noble women who were your forbears, and gave you your gude name. We must pay our debt to them though they be dead. You are no true Dalrymple, Kate, if you wouldna gie your right hand for the honor o' the auld house that crowns the Pentland crags."

"I would give my right hand to pleasure you, father; that is better."

"Weel, it's the same. Your uncle and I hae agreed that you are to marry your cousin Sholto, and I shall gie you a tocher down o' twenty thousand pounds. That will lift a' the mortgages, and you'll be Lady o' Daирg, Kate, and I'll be just the proudest man on the Trongate planestanes."

"Did you see Cousin Sholto?"

"He was awa' in the Shetlands on a seal hunt; but I heard naught at a' but gude o' the lad—an', at ony rate, he is a Dalrymple."

Not much more was said at this time. Kate was hardly ready yet either to oppose or circumvent the plan. She was not even sure whether she did not approve it, under conditions, for that intense pride of family which lies at the foundation of all Scotchmen's affections is not wanting in the women's hearts also, and if this young Dalrymple was worthy of her love and tocher, she was not disinclined to give it.

Many a long talk she had on the subject with Alice Pierson, a young English girl that Kate's mother had educated and brought up, and who served Kate partly as companion and partly as maid. But for some months her father said no more on the subject. The laird died, and he went forth to the funeral, and came back more clannish than ever, after mingling with the whole tribe in the solemn feudal ceremony of burying the dead chief.

It was the middle of the next summer before she heard any more of her intended bridegroom. Then a letter came, saying that he and his foster-brother Donald would be in Glasgow at the end of July. Kate had been sure that this news would come sooner or later, and was prepared for it. She received it with a smile, and said:

"Very well, father; I will try and like Sholto; only you must let me learn the lesson in my own way, and I have a little plan which you must help us to carry out. We are going down to Rothesay for sea bathing. No one knows us there, and Alice is to be Kate Dalrymple, and I am to be Alice Pierson. Sholto will then be at ease with me, and I shall find out his real character. If I can love him, I can win him."

"I'll play no Dalrymple false for any woman's scheme," said the provost, dourly; but at last, with infinite coaxing, he was persuaded to stay in Glasgow and remain passive.

Then the young ladies took up their quarters in the lovely village of Rothesay, and they were hardly settled before the Highland gentlemen paid them a visit.

Both were splendid-looking fellows, but Kate at once decided that Donald was the handsomer. Alice dressed and acted the petted heiress to perfection, and Kate put on the modest toilet and rather melancholy air of a dependent just

as cleverly.. They fished and rode and rambled, and spent six charming weeks; but, somehow, Sholto Dalrymple was always at the side of Alice the supposed heiress, and Donald with Kate the poor companion. Occasionally the two young men went to Glasgow for a week or two, but the wooing went merrily on, and all parties seemed determined to enjoy the present without thought of consequences.

"Consequences!" The word for the first time troubled Kate at the end of six weeks, and she resolved to run up and see her father, and find out what these might be. So, one evening, as they sat again together after dinner, she said:

"Father, I am going back to Rothesay to-morrow, and our pleasant little visit there must soon end. But I want to tell you that Sholto has scarcely left Alice's side. He thinks, of course, she is his cousin. It is humiliating, but he has paid me very little attention, indeed. Now, father, what if Sholto refuses to marry me?"

"Then he'll get his sword and a commission in the 42nd Highlanders. So much I maun do for him, onyway. But I shall buy the auld place mysel', and when you do marry, you maun either marry a Dalrymple, or we maun rebapteeze the lad."

"And suppose I am the disobedient one, father?"

"You'll no daur to be that, Kate. It wad break my heart. But I should then gie Sholto the twenty thousand pounds to lift the mortgages, an' you would hae to thole that loss, and, mayhap, mair besides; for I'll never see Daир Castle shelter stranger heads."

So Kate knew the worst now. She might be poor enough with Donald, but then, how generous and noble and unselfish he had constantly proved himself to be. And she loved him. Still, she felt that neither for this reason nor for any other could she so deeply disappoint and grieve her good father. No, no; she had done a very foolish thing in deceiving her cousin, and the thing must be undone at once.

Full of this determination she was shy and cold to Donald on her return, and when their usual evening ramble was proposed, refused to join it. Donald went out, but soon returned, and finding Kate alone, determined to know his fate. He told her how dearly he loved her, and he told his tale with such tenderness and earnestness, and was so handsome withal, that Kate was sorely tempted.

"If you knew how I loved you, Alice; if you knew what I must sacrifice to win you, you would surely give me some hope."

"Sacrifice!" The word nettled Kate in her present mood. "She could not see how the laird's foster-brother could sacrifice anything in marrying her."

"Ah! but, Alice, suppose *I am the laird*! Suppose that I changed places with my foster-brother, because I wanted to see in her true colors this cousin of mine to whom I was to be sold? Suppose that I love you so well that I would gladly give up Daig and all its lands to win you?"

"Donald! Donald! If, indeed, I could suppose this, I should be the happiest girl in all the world."

But she would not yet reveal her true character. She wandered out with him on the moonlit sands, and listened with a happy heart to all his plans. He would give up Daig to his uncle Thomas; it was mortgaged to its last acre; and for his part, he was glad so true a Dalrymple was able and willing to keep there the old ancestral state. His uncle was a born noble, and had promised him, at all events, a fine company; and with Alice to love, and a good sword to cut his way to fame and fortune, he was more than content.

Kate had never before been so bewitching; she set herself now to charm anew, and the young laird was proud beyond all counting of the woman he had won, although he really believed her to be poor enough, save in love and beauty.

Their radiant faces and the joyful confidence of their manners told their position at once to their companions, and Alice said, as soon as they were alone:

"We have done a very foolish thing, Kate. This young laird is really beginning to like me, and there was more in Donald's face and yours to-night than your father will sanction. We have played a very foolish game, Kate."

"We have played wiser than we knew, Alice. Did it ever strike you that the Laird of Dalrymple may have played me back my own card?"

Then Kate told softly over again the laird's own tale, and the two girls laughed a little, and cried a little, and were very pleasantly and happily astonished.

"We must go home now, Alice. I must tell father at once, and I don't want, just yet, to tell Sholto. Let us see if his love will stand a week's reflection."

So the party broke up for a week. The young men were to go to Edinburgh until they received a summons from Glasgow, and then return and arrange everything pertaining to the transfer of Daирg, and the marriage of Alice with Mr. Thomas Dalrymple.

The provost was highly delighted when Kate told him how completely she had been taken in her own net. "It was," he said, "Dalrymple again' Dalrymple, and baith have won;" and he kept laughing out merrily at intervals, for the whole next week, at "Mistress Kate playing sae cannilie into her ain hand."

The young laird was a little amazed at the cheerfulness of his uncle's greeting; but it was Daирg he was wanting, no doubt, he thought, "and he will care little enough for me now."

"So you have fallen in love wi' the wrang party, Sholto; but that's nane o' my doing, lad an' you must not lay it to me."

"Not I, uncle. I get Alice, and you are welcome to Daирg. I am glad it is going into such worthy hands."

"Yes, yes; dootless I'll look weel to its prosperity, Sholto; but I wish—"

"Never mind that, uncle—I am satisfied. If you will have the necessary papers made out, Daирg shall be yours whenever you wish."

"The papers are a' ready, Sholto. But send your traps up to my house. You maun stay wi' me until this commission an' marrying business is over."

So the young men removed to the provost's mansion, and when he came down for dinner, in all the pomp of his velvet suit and lace ruffles and golden badge, he found them waiting for him in the drawing-room.

"All alone by yoursel's, young men?" he said cheerily; "the lasses will be here anon;" and he seemed in such extravagant spirits that Sholto Dalrymple could hardly help doing his uncle's great heart a great injustice.

Presently the door opened, and Sholto rose eagerly to meet his affianced bride. Her magnificent dress and costly jewels startled him, and threw quite into the shade the plain black silk robe of her companion. Before, however, he could identify any single thought but that of admiration and amazement, the provost advanced to the ladies, and, taking

one by each arm, led them toward the laird and his foster-brother.

"Gentlemen," he said, gleefully, "ye hae gotten your introductions a' mixed up, so I'll just sort a' of your names right, afore we get our dinners. Sholto Dalrymple, Laird o' Dairg, this is Mistress Kate Dalrymple;" and Kate, with a loving smile, looked into Sholto's face and slipped her hand into his.

"Alice!"

"'Kate,' if you please, Sholto."

"Yes, indeed, Sholto, and dinna ye think, young man, you can play pliskies wi' a Dalrymple for naught. Ha! ha! you got paid in your ain coin this time, my laddie! Come awa', all o' you; I winna hae my fish cauld to suit your hawering; and there I see Donald and bonnie Alice Pierson have been introducing themselves; but ye hae got things right this time."

It was a wonderful dinner, and when, at its close, the provost brewed his glass of toddy, and handed Kate and Alice their "thimbleful," they were quite ready to drink the new family toast: "Here's to the Dalrymples of Dairg. Who's like them?"



WASHINGTON'S FIRST LOVE

BY FRANK FREEMAN HERBERT

Although some fictitious incidents are interwoven with this interesting romance of Washington's early life, it is founded mainly on fact. Written for Short Stories—Copyrighted. Illustrations by W. Granville Smith.

YEAR or more after the disastrous defeat of the British army, under Braddock, by the French and Indians, a tall, athletic-looking traveller was slowly pursuing his way one autumn afternoon on a lonely road, by the river, among the mountains known as the Highlands of the Hudson.

He was well mounted, and attended only by a single negro servant, who, as he watched his master's preoccupied air, would mutter with a grin which showed his white teeth:

"Massa colonel, he no tink I'se know he gwine call on Missus Mary."

After crossing the ferry they soon arrived at a fine mansion, standing on high ground on the east bank of the river, where it still may be seen, though fallen from its high estate and used in these days as the City Hall of the town of Yonkers.

The host and hostess came out to welcome their guest, whom they greeted as Colonel Washington, and a groom was summoned, who, with the slave attendant, presently disappeared, leading the horses in the direction of the stables, while our traveller was shown into the cheerful library.

The first impression of this fine room was pleasing, and a closer examination only made it seem more attractive. The ceilings were crossed with heavy oaken beams; low book-cases ranged against the side walls of the room and were surmounted with vases from Pompeii and other beautiful and

choice articles from classic lands; while, in the panels above, hung the portraits of stately men and beautiful ladies—for this is the manor house of the Phillipse patent.

An open spinet, with a flute on its top, a guitar hanging by its ribbons above, and a harp near by, told that there were lovers of music in this refined and cultivated household.

Although the foliage of the mountains was gay with the varied tints of autumn, yet this particular afternoon was so dark, bleak and cold as to make the large wood-fire that burned on the great hearth, occupying nearly the whole side of this magnificent room, the most attractive object there. The glowing embers on the stones, over which huge logs of hickory were crossed, sent upward an immense flame, with its forked tongue leaping and reflecting dancing images in the dark polished surface of the furniture, the brass andirons and fender and on the polished tiles, and seeming to proclaim in a hospitable roar to the guest:

“Welcome! Welcome!”

Colonel Beverly Robinson was an excellent host, aided as he was by his beautiful wife, Susannah, daughter of Sir Frederick Phillipse, the last lord of the manor. Our young colonel, after a brief absence from the room, had now returned with renovated toilet under the skillful ministrations of Pompey, and gave himself up to the enjoyment of the occasion. Cæsar brought in fresh relays of logs and Cato appeared with old wines in cut glasses on a silver salver.

Although even in his early manhood Washington's manners were habitually touched with reserve, none could unbend more delightfully than he, and for a time all felt the charm of his presence; then his friends noticed that he became more silent, and a constraint amounting almost to embarrassment crept over him.

Colonel Robinson at last inquired whether he could furnish him with aught beside for his personal comfort.

By no means. He was only too comfortable.

“I hope that you are in good health, Colonel Washington?” asked the punctilious host.

“My health is most excellent, Colonel Robinson,” replied Washington with gravity.

“Perhaps you are fatigued with your journey?”

With a smile the younger man replied that a ride over the Highlands of the Hudson was a small matter to a soldier

who had crossed the dense forests of Pennsylvania, the Allegheny mountains, and forded the Ohio River.

Mrs. Robinson now invited him to a place beside her on the low window-seat, from which one of the most glorious views in the world—a rare combination of water and mountain scenery—displayed itself. The Hudson rolled in beauty below, while Storm-King and Anthony's Nose reared their lofty heads heavenward on the other side of the river.

But Mrs. Robinson found it quite impossible, even by calling attention to this beautiful scene, to divert the mind of her guest from the thoughts that so preoccupied him.

Did her woman's tact and wit divine the cause?

Finally this brave officer, who had not trembled before the trained armies of France, nor heeded the yells of the savage, quailed before the soft eye of this gentle woman, as he stammered :

“ I—I—hope Miss Mary is well? ”

Mrs. Robinson, with some coldness, replied: “ Miss Phillipse is in good health. ”

“ Is—is—she with you? ”

“ My sister is with me, but fatigued by her journey. ”

In a faint whisper, scarcely audible, the embarrassed young man asked: “ Could I see her? ”

Colonel Robinson, who had been playing with a noble dog, looked up, and noticing the evident constraint of the parties in the window-seat, with an amused twinkle of the eye, exclaimed: “ Oh, yes, my dear; where is Mary? Call her; she will entertain the colonel and amuse us all. ”

With evident reluctance, Mrs. Robinson obeyed her liege lord. Colonel Washington remained in silence with his eyes fixed upon the door, unable to reply to the banter of his companion.

After a brief period the hostess returned, accompanied by the young lady in question.

At this juncture the setting sun burst through the dark clouds which had enveloped it during the day. It shone with brilliancy upon the mountains, the bright beams revealed each tree and shrub in its gay autumn dress. It glittered on the blue river and lighted up our young officer's face, now full of happiness at this long looked-for meeting.

The effect of Miss Phillipse's entrance had been magical. And as they sit together in the wide window-seat we shall

try to give our readers a correct pen-picture of this colonial belle from an oil portrait taken in the prime of her youth, beauty and prosperity.

She was below the middle height, of a round, full figure. Her features were regular and beautiful, her teeth white and

even, while dimples played around her well-shaped mouth. The color of her eyes none could determine, though brown seemed their prevailing tint, yet at times they were blue ; again there were tints of green, perhaps we should say beryl. Her hair, which was of great length and thickness, was of a

rich golden color, but was also capable of assuming varied tints, as the light and rays of the sun shone upon her. Defying all restraint of cushion, comb or pin, it fell in two long, waving, curling masses, far below her waist.

She was full of graces; she walked, stood and danced with an elegance all her own. The same charm extended to her manner and conversation. Of course she had received every possible advantage of education and high social surroundings, not only while at home, but from an extended residence abroad for educational purposes, and while occupying the position of maid of honor to the daughter of Frederick, Prince of Wales. Thus, with all her natural endowments and graces, united with her acquirements and privileges, done could deny the fact that the youngest surviving daughter of Sir Frederick Phillipse, lord of the manor, was a most charming and captivating girl. It was considered a great honor to be allowed to visit her, and still greater to be considered one of her admirers.

Pleasant was the evening meal in the family dining-room; the rich mahogany side-board and table, unencumbered by cloth, reflected the old silver and cut glass in their highly polished surfaces, and were laden with all the delicacies and bounteousness of colonial days, interspersed with dishes of lovely fragrant flowers. As the family and their guest chatted merrily, waited on by dignified colored servants with napkin on arm, under the command of the head-waiter, Felix, pleasant was the lively flow of talk around that festal board and inspiring the wit and cultivated conversation of the host, enlivened with reminiscences of ancestral homes in merrie old England.

Our young officer also entered upon the spirit of the occasion, contributing his share with his anecdotes of Virginia, his stories of the warfare of the borders, of Fort Necessity and of Fort Duquesne.

Only the gentle hostess remained silent, almost pensive. Did her woman's intuition perceive the gathering of a cloud?

Upon their return to the library, by that mysterious influence and connection of spirits almost magical, her pensiveness and reserve appeared to be communicated to her companions, and especially upon Colonel Washington did the spell fall. He became absorbed, distrait, and ceased to respond to the lively banter of his young companion. He

declined the evening glass of wine which his host, according to the usual custom, pressed upon him, and as the hours advanced became so evidently embarrassed that Colonel Robinson, with a roguish twinkle in his eyes, informed his wife in an aside that they were *de trop*, and proposed that they should retire for the night.

Cæsar was summoned, and entered with a generous supply of logs on his back, while his face wore a grin extending from ear to ear, displaying his white teeth, as at a glance he comprehended the situation; and his "Good-night, Massa Colonel—Good-night, Missus Mary" were richly spiced with his interest in the colonel's success as a wooer.

And now to our young officer has come the opportunity so intensely and so long desired, since his first meeting with Mary Phillipse.

For some time after the young people were left alone the conversation was bright and animated. Then the tones grew earnest and low. The strokes of the great clock in the hall increased in number until the hour of midnight was reached, and still Washington and his companion occupied their seats by the dying embers now turned to ashes, signifying desolation. At last, while he still pleaded in vain, Miss Phillipse, arising from her lowly seat with decision, then and there refused the heart and hand of the one destined by Providence to be the man of the age—and decided in favor of his rival, Major Roger Morris.

After she had left the room, Washington remained motionless, speechless, as though stunned, until the day began to brighten and Chloe, by a benevolent rattling of the door-knob, signified her wish to enter and arrange the room for the reception of the family. Then he returned to his own undisturbed room, and flinging himself upon the lounge abandoned himself to the anguish and despair that oppressed him.

A quarter of a century has elapsed since Washington had loved and lost, and in that time the country has become involved in its great struggle for a national existence and independence.

But let us once more revisit the manor house, now that the glorious highlands are again clothed in their rich and brilliant autumn dress.

But what a change has come over this grand old colonial mansion!

Where is the massive furniture? Those valuable books? Those well-stored cabinets? Where are the musical instruments, the paintings, and other works of art? Above all, where is the happy group that made the house merry with their jests and laughter? An air of desolation broods over the whole place, the conservatory once brilliant with choice flowers, is empty, or filled only with sashes, caps, swords and other military belongings, and what remains of the rich furniture is scratched, stained, and distributed haphazard through the various rooms of that once stately mansion, now occupied as military offices. Soldiers are everywhere in possession, for the home of the Phillipses is now the headquarters of the American army. One room alone retains any semblance of former days—the dining-room, in which this very week, in this year of grace 1780, has been revealed the startling treachery of General Benedict Arnold.

But of all the happy group that with their slave attendants surrounded the supper-table and made merry on that particular evening in the autumn of 1756, only one is to be seen. The beautiful and graceful Mary Phillipse had been shortly after united in marriage to Major Roger Morris, of His British Majesty's army, a man of wit, humor, and many attractive social qualities, but of great weaknesses—vacillating, unsteady and over-fond of the luxury which he enjoyed to the utmost on the large income of his wife. On being urged to remain true to his country he gave vent to his sentiments in the following expressions:

“What! expect me, a regular officer of the line, to give up my fashionable and titled connections, my high official military associations with the trained army of the King of Great Britain, to join the ragged recruits of the rebellion, with my old rival at their head? No doubt Colonel Washington, with his squeamish conscience, thinks he is in the right, or performing his duty; but he will never succeed, no never. Give me wealth, luxury, a titled aristocracy, the king, and the throne. The rebellion shall be quenched—right or wrong. Rags, poverty, and duty may go to the wall,” quoth Major Morris.

After long and painful indecision his brother-in-law, Colonel Robinson, followed him, against his convictions of duty,

and urged onward by his wife of whom he was extravagantly fond. She of course was mainly guided in this matter by her affections, her family—father, brother, and sister—being on the side of the king and crown.

So when the fortunes of the American army brightened under the great commander-in-chief, General George Washington, and the Hudson River from West Point to Fishkill became the scene of military tactics, the Phillipse house was occupied as headquarters, and the exiled family resorted for safety and protection to the British lines.

And now a solitary figure is pacing up and down the deserted garden-walk on the banks of the beautiful river, but heeds it not as it rolls beneath him. The brilliant leaves, shaken by the autumn blasts, fall unnoticed around him. He is absorbed in deep and painful reflection amounting almost to anguish, as he strolls to and fro. Although evidently accustomed to strong self-control, his features are at times almost convulsed by mental agitation, and his lips are more tightly compressed than usual. At last the struggle is ended, and his face is illumined with a new light as he mutters: "It is my duty, I will perform it, let the consequences be what they may, I will dare to do right."

Heavy have been the burdens of the commander-in-chief of America's armies during this past week of his residence in the old manor house, where he remains the solitary survivor of the scenes of happier days. Shall he sign the death warrant of André, the favorite of Great Britain's army? It will make him seem cruel, and to many, a too-willing executioner, while in fact, every tender fibre of his great heart revolts at the deed made all the more necessary by Arnold's dastardly acts.



But duty triumphed. His horse was soon ready, and attended by his escort he was presently on his way toward New York to visit the outposts of his army, and give orders for the execution of the unhappy young British officer.

At various points on the journey he was besieged with applications for the pardon of this interesting young man. But no; although it cost him bitter pangs, convinced that it was his duty, he was not to be swerved from his purpose of hanging one he considered a spy.

When the outposts were reached Washington was informed that three persons from the British lines, under a flag of truce, were anxious to wait upon him.

It was dusk as the three strangers, shrouded in cloaks, were brought before him by the guard.

"Your business?" said the commander-in-chief, with that brevity of speech and imposing dignity so peculiarly his own.

"We—we—h-have c-come to—" began the tallest one of the three, but could not proceed.

With an impatient exclamation, one of the others took up the conversation. "We have come, sir, knowing the kindness of your heart and the benevolence of your disposition, to plead for the life of Major André."

"I thought as much," was the reply. "And what reasons have you for interfering with military justice?"

"We have ventured to intrude upon you, sir, on the strength of old acquaintance."

At this juncture the taller figure threw aside his cloak, and in tremulous tones said: "George, don't you know me!"

For one moment the general faltered; the old friendship asserted itself as he looked upon the worn and altered aspect of his old friend, Colonel Beverly Robinson. But in a moment he regained his self-command. "It cannot be done. It is in vain to ask me. Were he my own son I should sign his death warrant."

"Your Excellency," said the second speaker, "perhaps has not thought of the fact that the whole civilized world will condemn you if you persist in what will seem to them an act of cruelty. Think, too, of the accomplishments, rank, and high social standing of Major André."

In silence General Washington regarded with disgust the now bloated features of the last speaker, who having also dropped his disguise, showed himself as Washington's former rival, Major Roger Morris.

"Perhaps if you will not listen to us, you may hear the intercession of another friend," said Colonel Robinson. And as he spoke the third figure dropped its hooded cloak and George Washington was again face to face with the woman he had loved.

For one moment Washington turned as pale as death, and trembled violently as he looked in the face that once had seemed the most beautiful in the world to him, and still retained many traces of the charms that had ravished so many hearts. But his emotion was transient. He was himself again—the military officer accustomed to command and to be obeyed; the Christian who at all times and under all circumstances would perform his duty.

Drawing himself up to his full height, until his tall figure seemed more imposing than ever in comparison with the cringing servility and corpulency of Major Morris, and the air of decay surrounding Colonel Robinson, Washington said with dignity: "This painful interview must be ended. My duty is clear. By God's help, I must—I will perform it!"

Then, calling for a guard, he said: "Convey these persons in safety to the British lines," and mounting his horse, General Washington rode slowly away.

This was the last meeting between General George Washington and his first love, Mary Phillipse.

The story of Washington's early love is ended, yet it may

not be amiss for us to lift the curtain and look into the after life of this woman to whom so many talents had been given, and who at one period conquered the great conqueror.

The struggle for independence ended, the treaty of peace between the United States and Great Britain was signed in London, September 4, 1783, and on the 25th of November of that year the British troops evacuated New York.

But other departures were yet to take place. For some weeks sorrowful groups were seen wending their way to the Battery. Sad were the partings that there took place; bitter were the tears that were shed as parents and children, brothers and sisters, dear and attached friends, separated to meet no more in this world. The travelers who entered the small boats at the Battery wharf were the loyalists, who, with property confiscated, were now exiled from their native land. The ships awaiting them in the bay were to convey them to the British provinces, or even in some cases to old England.

One group attracted particular attention. They were the survivors of the once wealthy and powerful family of Sir Frederick Phillipse. Their great estates, the largest manor in the land, had reverted to the government, and, unable or unwilling to face their fellow-countrymen who had been true to America, they left their native shores, many of them forever.

In an English home, nearly half a century after these events, an aged lady heard of the honors paid to the memory of the departed hero, the Father of his Country, on the centennial of his birth. She was all alone—husband, brothers and sisters, all had joined the great majority.

What must have been her feelings as she reviewed the distant past?

Regrets were now unavailing. Martha Custis wore the honors refused by her, and nations then unborn call her memory blessed.

Mary Phillipse in loneliness and exile, with beauty faded, wealth, position and friends all gone, the last leaf on the tree, a sorrowful relic of the distant past, watched the long years, ninety-eight in number, creep slowly by.

She must have been very weary of them, when in the year 1832, her long pilgrimage ended, she was borne to her tomb in a foreign land.

THE ACCURSED HOUSE

BY ÉMILE GABORIAU

In this amusing sketch an over-conscientious householder does his tenants a good turn and is promptly rewarded. Translated from the French, by E. C. Waggener, for Short Stories.

The Vicomte de B——, an amiable and charming young man, was peacefully enjoying an income of 30,000 livres yearly, when, unfortunately for him, his uncle, a miser of the worst species, died, leaving him all his wealth amounting to nearly two millions.

In running through the documents of succession, the Vicomte de B—— learned that he was the proprietor of a house in the rue de la Victoire. He learned, also, that the unfurnished building, bought in 1849 for 300,000 francs, now brought in, clear of taxes, rentals amounting to 82,000 francs a year.

“Too much, too much, entirely,” thought the generous vicomte, “my uncle was too hard; to rent at this price is usury, one cannot deny it. When one bears a great name like mine, one should not lend himself to such plundering. I will begin to-morrow to lower my rents and my tenants will bless me.”

With this excellent purpose in view, the Vicomte de B—— sent immediately for the *concièrge* of the building, who presented himself as promptly, with back bent like a bow.

“Bernard, my friend,” said the vicomte, “go at once from me and notify all your tenants that I lower their rents by one-third.”

That unheard of word “lower” fell like a brick on Bernard’s head. But he quickly recovered himself; he had heard badly; he had not understood.

“Low—er the rents!” stammered he. “Monsieur le Vicomte deigns to jest. Lower! Monsieur of course means to raise the rents.”

“I was never more serious in my life, my friend,” the vicomte returned; “I said, and I repeat it, lower the rents.”

This time the *concièrge* was surprised to the point of bewilderment—so thrown off his balance that he forgot himself and lost all restraint.

“Monsieur has not reflected,” persisted he. “Monsieur will regret this evening. Lower the tenants’ rents! Never was such a thing known, monsieur! If the lodgers should learn of it, what would they think of monsieur? What would people say in the neighborhood? Truly—”

“Monsieur Bernard, my friend,” dryly interrupted the vicomte, “I prefer, when I give an order, to be obeyed without reply. You hear me—go!”

Staggering like a drunken man Monsieur Bernard went out from the house of his proprietor.

All his ideas were upset, overthrown, confounded. Was he, or was he not, the plaything of a dream, a ridiculous nightmare? Was he himself Pierre Bernard, or Bernard somebody else?

“Lower his rents! lower his rents!” repeated he. “It is not to be believed! If indeed the lodgers had complained! But they have not complained; on the contrary, all are good payers. Ah! if his uncle could only know this, he would rise from the tomb! His nephew has gone mad, ’tis certain! Lower the rents! They should have up this young man before a family council; he will finish badly! Who knows—after this—what he will do next? He lunched too well, perhaps, this morning.”

And the worthy Bernard was so pale with emotion when he re-entered his lodge, so pale and spent that on seeing him enter, his wife and daughter Amanda exclaimed as with one voice:

“Goodness! what is it? What has happened to you now?”

“Nothing,” responded he, with altered voice, “absolutely nothing.”

“You are deceiving me,” insisted Mme. Bernard, “you are concealing something from me; do not spare me; speak, I am strong—what did the new proprietor tell you? Does he think of turning us off?”

“If it were only that! But just think, he told me with his own lips, he told me to—ah! you will never believe me—”

“Oh, yes; only do go on.”

“You will have it, then! . . . Well, then, he told me, he ordered me to notify all the tenants that—*he lowered their*

rents one third! Did you hear what I said?—*lowered* the rents of the tenants——”

But neither Mme. nor Mlle. Bernard heard him out—they were twisting and doubling with convulsive laughter.

“Lower!” repeated they; “ah! what a good joke, what a droll man! Lower the tenants’ rents.”

But Bernard, losing his temper and insisting that he must be taken seriously in his own lodge, his wife lost her temper too, and a quarrel followed! Mme. Bernard declaring that Mons. Bernard had, beyond a doubt, taken his fantastic order from the bottom of a litre of wine in the restaurant at the corner.

But for Mlle. Amanda the couple would undoubtedly have come to blows, and finally Mme. Bernard, who did not wish to be thought demented, threw a shawl over her head and ran to the proprietor’s house. Bernard had spoken truly; with her own two ears, ornamented with big, gilded hoops, she heard the incredible word. Only, as she was a wise and prudent woman, she demanded “a bit of writing” to put, as she said, “her responsibility under cover.”

She, too, returned thunderstruck; and all the evening in the lodge, father mother and daughter deliberated.

Should they obey? or should they warn some relative of this mad young man, whose common sense would oppose itself to such insanity?

They decided to obey.

Next morning, Bernard, buttoning himself into his best frock coat, made the rounds of the three-and-twenty lodges to announce his great news.

Ten minutes afterwards the house in the rue de la Victoire was in a state of commotion impossible to describe. People who, for forty years had lived on the same floor, and never honored each other with so much as a tip of the hat, now clustered together and chatted eagerly.

“Do you know, monsieur?”

“It is very extraordinary.”

“Simply unheard of!”

“The proprietor’s lowered my rent!”

“One third, is it not? Mine also.”

“Astounding! It *must* be a mistake!”

And despite the affirmations of the Bernard family, despite even the “bit of writing” “under cover,” there were found

among the tenants doubting Thomases, who doubted still in the face of everything.

Three of them actually wrote to the proprietor to tell him what had passed, and to charitably warn him that his *conci-èrge* had wholly lost his mind. The proprietor responded to these skeptics, confirming what Bernard had said. Doubt, thereafter, was out of the question.

Then began reflections and commentaries.

"*Why* had the proprietor lowered his rents?"

"Yes, *why*?"

"What motives," said they all, "actuate this strange man? For certainly he must have grave reasons for a step like this! An intelligent man, a man with good sense, would never deprive himself of good fat revenues, well secured, for the simple pleasure of depriving himself. One would not conduct himself thus without being forced, constrained by powerful or terrible circumstances."

And each said to himself:

"*There is something under all this!*"

"But what?"

And from the first floor to the sixth, they sought and conjectured and delved in their brains. Every lodger had the preoccupied air of a man that strives with all his wits to solve an impossible cipher, and everywhere there began to be a vague disquiet, as it happens when one finds himself in the presence of a sinister mystery.

Some one went so far as to hazard:

"This man must have committed a great and still hidden crime; remorse pushes him to philanthropy."

"It was not a pleasant idea, either, the thought of living thus side by side with a rascal; no, by no means; he might be repentant, and all that, but suppose he yielded to temptation once more!"

"The house, perhaps, was badly built?" questioned another, anxiously.

"Hum-m, so-so! no one could tell; but all knew one thing—it was very, very old!"

"True! and it had been necessary to prop it when they dug the drain last year in the month of March."

"Maybe it was the roof, then, and the house is top-heavy?" suggested a tenant on the fifth floor.

"Or perhaps," said a lodger in the garret, "there is a

press for coining counterfeit money in the cellar; I have often heard at night a sound like the dull, muffled thud of a coin-stamper."

The opinion of another was that Russian, maybe Prussian, spies had gained a lodgment in the house, while the gentleman of the first story was inclined to believe that the proprietor purposed to set fire to his house and furniture with the sole object of drawing great sums from the insurance companies.

Then began to happen, as they all declared, extraordinary, and even frightful things. On the sixth and mansard floors it appeared that strange and absolutely inexplicable noises were heard. Then the nurse of the old lady on the fourth story, going one night to steal wine from the cellar, encountered the ghost of the defunct proprietor—he even held in his hand a receipt for rent—by which she knew him!

And the refrain from loft to cellar was:

"There *is* something under all this!"

From disquietude it had come to fright; from fright it quickly passed to terror. So that the gentleman of the first floor, who had valuables in his rooms, made up his mind to go, and sent in notice by his clerk.

Bernard went to inform the proprietor, who responded:

"All right, let the fool go!"

But next day the chiropodist of the second floor, though he had naught to fear for his valuables, imitated the gentleman beneath him. Then the bachelors and the little households of the fifth story quickly followed this example.

From that moment it was a general rout. By the end of the week, everybody had given notice. Everyone awaited some frightful catastrophe. They slept no more. They organized patrols. The terrified domestics swore that they too would quit the accursed house and remained temporarily only on tripled wages.

Bernard was no more than the ghost of himself; the fever of fear had worn him to a shadow.

"No," repeated his wife mournfully, at each fresh notification, "no, it is *not* natural."

Meanwhile three-and-twenty "For Rent" placards swung against the façade of the house, drawing an occasional applicant for lodgings.

Bernard—never grumbling now—climbed the staircase and ushered the visitor from apartment to apartment.

“You can have your choice,” said he to the people that presented themselves, “the house is entirely vacant; all the tenants have given notice as one man. They do not know why, exactly, but things have happened, oh! yes, *things!* a mystery such as was never before known—the *proprietor has lowered his rents!*”

And the would-be lodgers fled away affrighted.

The term ended, three-and-twenty vans carried away the furniture of the three-and-twenty tenants. Everybody left. From top to bottom, from foundations to garret, the house lay empty of lodgers.

The rats themselves, finding nothing to live on, abandoned it also.

Only the *concièrge* remained, gray green with fear in his lodge. Frightful visions haunted his sleep. He seemed to hear lugubrious howlings and sinister murmurs at night that made his teeth chatter with terror and his hair erect itself under his cotton night-cap. Madame Bernard no more closed an eye than he. And Amanda in her frenzy renounced all thought of the operatic stage and married—for nothing in the world but to quit the paternal lodge—a young barber and hair-dresser whom she had never before been able to abide.

At last, one morning, after a more frightful nightmare than usual, Bernard, too, took a great resolution. He went to the proprietor, gave up his keys and scampered away.

And now on the rue de la Victoria stands the abandoned house, “The Accursed House,” whose history I have told you. Dust thickens upon the closed slats, grass grows in the court. No tenant ever presents himself now and in the quarter, where stands this Accursed House, so funereal is its reputation that even the neighboring houses on either side of it have also depreciated in value.

Lower one’s rents!! Who would think of such a thing!!!

THE OUTLANDISH LADIES

BY ARTHUR T. QUILLER-COUCH

This pathetic story tells of certain exiles in a far country. From "Noughts and Crosses"—Cassell Publishing Company.

A mile beyond the fishing village, as you follow the road that climbs inland towards Tregarrick, the two tall hills to right and left of the coombe diverge to make room for a third, set like a wedge in the throat of the vale. Here the road branches into two, with a sign-post at the angle; and between the sign-post and the gray scarp of the hill there lies an acre of waste ground that the streams have turned into a marsh. This is Loose-heels. Long before I learnt the name's meaning, in the days when I trod the lower road with slate and satchel, this spot was a favorite of mine—but chiefly in July, when the monkey-flower was out, and the marsh aflame with it.

There was a spell in that yellow blossom with the wicked blood-red spots, that held me its mere slave. Also the finest grew in desperate places. So that, day after day, when July came round, my mother would cry shame on my small-clothes, and my father take exercise upon them; and all the month I went tingling. They were pledged to "break me of it"; but they never did. Now they are dead, and the flowers—the flowers last always, as Victor Hugo says. When, after many years, I revisited the valley, the stream had carried the seeds half a mile below Loose-heels, and painted its banks with monkey-blossoms all the way. But the finest, I was glad to see, still inhabited the marsh.

Now, it is rare to find this plant growing wild; for, in fact, it is a garden flower. And its history here is connected with a bit of mud wall, ruined and covered with mosses and ragwort, that still pushed up from the swampy ground when I knew it, and had once been a part of a cottage. How a cottage came here, and how its inhabitants entered and went out, are questions past guessing; for

the marsh hemmed it in on three sides, and the fourth is a slope of hill fit to break your neck. But there was the wall, and here is the story.

One morning, near the close of the last century, a small child came running down to the village with news that the cottage, which for ten years had stood empty, was let; there was smoke coming out at the chimney, and an outlandish lady walking in the garden. Being catechised, he added that the lady wore bassomy bows in her cap, and had accosted him in a heathen tongue that caused him to flee, fearing worse things. This being told, two women, rulers of their homes, sent their husbands up the valley to spy, who found the boy had spoken truth.

Smoke was curling from the chimney, and in the garden the lady was still moving about—a small yellow creature, with a wrinkled but pleasant face, white curls, and piercing black eyes. She wore a black gown, cut low in the neck, a white kerchief, and bassomy (or purplish) bows in her cap as the child had stated. Just at present she was busy with a spade, and showed an ankle passing neat for her age, as she turned up the neglected mold. When the men plucked up gallantry enough to offer their services, she smiled and thanked them in broken English, but said that her small forces would serve.

So they went back to their wives; and their wives, recollecting that the cottage formed part of the glebe, went off to inquire of Parson Morth, “than whom,” as the tablet to his memory relates, “none was better to castigate the manners of the age.” He was a burly, hard-riding ruffian, and the tale of his great fight with Gipsy Ben in Launceston streets is yet told on the countryside.

Parson Morth wanted to know if he couldn't let his cottage to an invalid lady and her sister without consulting every wash-mouth in the parish.

“Aw, so there's two!” said one of them, nodding her head. “But tell us, Parson dear, ef 'tes fitty for two unmated women to come trapesing down in a po'shay at dead o' night, when all modest flesh be in their bed-gowns?”

Upon this the parson's language became grossly indelicate, after the fashion of those days. He closed his peroration by slamming the front door on his visitors; and they

went down the hill "blushing" (as they said) "all over, at his intimate words."

So nothing more was known of the strangers. But it was noticed that Parson Morth, when he passed the cottage on his way to meet or market, would pull up his mare, and, if the outlandish lady were working in the garden, would doff his hat respectfully.

"*Bon jour, Mamzelle Henriette*"—this was all the French the parson knew. And the lady would smile back and answer in English:

"Good-morning, Parson Morth."

"And Mamzelle Lucille?"

"Ah, just the same, my God! All the day stare—stare. If you had known her before!—so be-eautiful, so gifted, *si bien élevée*! It is an affliction; but I think she loves the flowers."

And the parson rode on with a lump in his throat.

So two years passed, during which Mademoiselle Henriette tilled her garden and turned it into a paradise. There were white roses on the south wall, and in the beds mignonette and boy's-love, pansies, carnations, gillyflowers, sweet-williams, and flaming great hollyhocks; above all, the yellow monkey-blossoms that throve so well in the marshy soil. And all that while no one had caught so much as a glimpse of her sister, Lucille. Also how they lived was a marvel. The outlandish lady bought neither fish, nor butcher's meat, nor bread. To be sure, the parson sent down a pint of milk every morning from his dairy; the can was left at the garden-gate and fetched at noon, when it was always found neatly scrubbed, with the price of the milk inside. Besides, there was a plenty of vegetables in the garden.

But this was not enough to avert the whisper of witchcraft. And one day, when Parson Morth had ridden off to the wrestling matches at Exeter, the blow fell.

Farmer Anthony of Carne—great-grandfather of the present farmer—had been losing sheep. Now, not a man in the neighborhood would own to having stolen them; so what so easy to suspect as witchcraft? Who so fatally open to suspicion as the two outlandish sisters? Men, wives, and children formed a procession.

The month was July; and Mademoiselle Henriette was out in the garden, a bunch of monkey-flowers in her hand,

when they arrived. She turned all white, and began to tremble like a leaf. But when the spokesman stated the charge, there was another tale.

"It was an infamy. Steal! She would have them know that she and her sister were of good West Indian family—*très bien élevés*." Then followed a torrent of epithets. They were *lâches*—*poltrons*. Why were they not fighting Bonaparte, instead of sending their wives up to the cliffs, dressed in red cloaks, to scare him away, while they bullied weak women?

They pushed past her. The cottage held two rooms on the ground floor. In the kitchen, which they searched first, they found only some garden-stuff and a few snails salted in a pan. There was a door leading to the inner room, and the foremost had his hand on it, when Mademoiselle Henriette rushed before him, and flung herself at his feet. The yellow monkey-blossoms were scattered and trampled on the floor.

"*Ah—non, non, messieurs! Je vous prie—Elle est si—si horrible!*"

They flung her down, and pushed on.

The invalid sister lay in an arm-chair with her back to the doorway, a bunch of monkey-flowers beside her. As they burst in, she started, laid both hands on the arms of her chair, and turned her face slowly upon them.

She was a leper!

They gave one look at that featureless face, with the white scales shining upon it, and ran back with their arms lifted before their eyes. One woman screamed. Then a dead stillness fell on the place, and the cottage was empty.

On the following Saturday Parson Morth walked down to the inn, just ten minutes after stalling his mare. He strode into the tap-room in his muddy boots, took two men by the neck, knocked their skulls together, and then demanded to hear the truth.

"Very well," he said, on hearing the tale; "to-morrow I march every man Jack of you up to the valley, if it's by the scruff of your necks, and in the presence of both of those ladies—of *both*, mark you—you shall kneel down and ask them to come to church. I don't care if I empty the building. Your fathers (who were men, not curs) built the south transept for those same poor souls, and cut a slice in the

chancel arch through which they might see the Host lifted. That's where *you* sit, Jim Trestrail, churchwarden; and by the Lord Harry, they shall have your pew."

He marched them up the very next morning. He knocked, but no one answered. After waiting a while, he put his shoulder against the door, and forced it in.

There was no one in the kitchen. In the inner room one sister sat in the arm-chair. It was Mademoiselle Henriette, cold and stiff. Her dead hands were stained with earth.

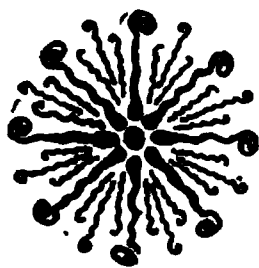
At the back of the cottage they came on a freshly-formed mound, and stuck on the top of it a piece of slate, such as children erect over a thrush's grave.

On it was scratched—

Çi-Gît
LUCILLE,
Jadis si Belle;
Dont dix-neuf Jeunes Hommes, Planteurs de
SAINT DOMINGUE,
ont demandés la Main.
MAIS LA PETITE NE VOULAIT PAS.

R. I. P.

This is the story of Loose-heels, otherwise Lucille's.



THE WONDERFUL CATCH

BY CATULLE MENDES

A dainty conceit. Translated from the French, by E. Maude Phelps for Short Stories—Copyrighted.

Dressed all in white, his white cat seated by his side, Gilles is fishing—for perch? Oh, no, for planets.

For Gillette has promised him a kiss on her rosy lips if he will fetch her a basket full of planets.

At first he was minded to cast his line up to the skies and hook the planets down from the firmament, but the firmament is higher than his line can reach, and he must content himself with fishing in the nearest brook for the reflections of the planets mirrored in it.

Just then something seizes the hook—it is Venus whom he draws up. He takes her off the hook, and placing her carefully in the basket beside him tries his luck again. Mars, Mercury, Neptune, Jupiter, all bite in their turn, and now Gilles thinks he can return to Gillette and claim the promised reward. With the cat at his heels he enters her doors, basket on arm.

“What have you brought me?” inquires Gillette.

“The reflection of the stars you desired.”

“Good. But I asked for the stars and not for shadows. But you may, if you choose, kiss the reflection of my lips in the mirror hanging yonder.”

Gilles is disappointed, of course.

However, as next to nothing is better than nothing at all, he resigns himself and is about to lean forward to kiss the red mouth mirrored in the glass, when Gillette, who has lifted up the cover of the willow-basket with one taper finger, exclaims suddenly: “But the basket is quite empty,” and turns her back scornfully on Gilles and the mirror.

But where had the reflections of the planets, caught in the stream, gone?

Just think, while Gilles and Gillette were busy talking, the white cat had devoured them all.

THE RED-HEADED LEAGUE

BY A. CONAN DOYLE

A clever detective story from "Adventures of Sherlock Holmes." Copyright, 1892, by Harper & Brothers. Illustrations drawn by H. M. Wolcott, after Sidney Paget, for Short Stories.

I had called upon my friend, Mr. Sherlock Holmes, one day in the autumn of last year, and found him in deep conversation with a very stout, florid-faced, elderly gentleman, with fiery red hair. With an apology for my intrusion, I was about to withdraw, when Holmes pulled me abruptly into the room, and closed the door behind me.

"You could not possibly have come at a better time, my dear Watson," he said cordially.

"I was afraid that you were engaged."

"So I am. Very much so."

"Then I can wait in the next room."

"Not at all. This gentleman, Mr. Wilson, has been my partner and helper in many of my most successful cases, and I have no doubt that he will be of the utmost use to me in yours also."

The stout gentleman half rose from his chair, and gave a bob of greeting, with a quick little questioning glance from his small, fat-encircled eyes.

"Try the settee," said Holmes, relapsing into his arm-chair, and putting his finger-tips together, as was his custom when in judicial moods. "I know, my dear Watson, that you share my love of all that is bizarre and outside the conventions and humdrum routine of every-day life. You have shown your relish for it by the enthusiasm which has prompted you to chronicle, and, if you will excuse my saying so, somewhat to embellish so many of my own little adventures."

"Perhaps, Mr. Wilson, you would have the great kindness to recommence your narrative. I ask you, not merely because my friend Dr. Watson has not heard the opening part, but also because the peculiar nature of the story makes me anxious to have every possible detail from your lips. As a rule, when I have heard some slight indication of the course of events I am able to guide myself by the thousands of

other similar cases which occur to my memory. In the present instance I am forced to admit that the facts are, to the best of my belief, unique."

The portly client puffed out his chest with an appearance of some little pride, and pulled a dirty and wrinkled newspaper from the inside pocket of his greatcoat. As he glanced down the advertisement column, with his head thrust forward, and the paper flattened out upon his knee, I took a good look at the man, and endeavored after the fashion of my companion to read the indications which might be presented by his dress or appearance.

I did not gain very much, however, by my inspection.

Our visitor bore every mark of being an average commonplace British tradesman, obese, pompous, and slow. He wore rather baggy gray shepherd's check trousers, a not over-clean black frockcoat, unbuttoned in the front, and a drab waistcoat with a heavy brassy Albert chain, and a square pierced bit of metal dangling down as an ornament. A frayed top hat and a faded brown overcoat with a wrinkled velvet collar lay upon a chair beside him. Altogether, look as I would, there was nothing remarkable about the man save his blazing red head, and the expression of extreme chagrin and discontent upon his features.

"Can you not find the advertisement, Mr. Wilson?" asked Holmes.

"Yes, I have got it now," he answered, with his thick, red finger planted half-way down the column. "Here it is. This is what began it all. You just read it for yourself, sir."

I took the paper from him, and read as follows:

"TO THE RED-HEADED LEAGUE.—On account of the bequest of the late Ezekiah Hopkins, of Lebanon, Penn., U. S. A., there is now another vacancy open which entitles a member of the League to a salary of four pounds a week for purely nominal services. All red-headed men who are sound in body and mind, and above the age of twenty-one years, are eligible. Apply in person on Monday, at 11 o'clock, to Duncan Ross, at the offices of the League, 7 Pope's Court, Fleet Street."

"What on earth does this mean?" I ejaculated, after I had twice read over the extraordinary announcement.

Holmes chuckled and wriggled in his chair, as was his habit when in high spirits. "It is a little off the beaten track, isn't it?" said he. "And now, Mr. Wilson, off you go at scratch, and tell us all about yourself, your household, and the effect which this advertisement had upon your fortunes. You will first make a note, doctor, of the paper and the date."

"It is The Morning Chronicle, of April 27, 1890. Just two months ago."

"Very good. Now, Mr. Wilson?"

"Well, it is just as I have been telling you, Mr. Sherlock Holmes," said Jabez Wilson, mopping his forehead, "I have a small pawnbroker's business at Coburg Square, near the city. It is not a very large affair, and of late years it has not done more than just give me a living. I used to be able to keep two assistants, but now I only keep one; and I would have a job to pay him, but that he is willing to come for half wages, so as to learn the business."

"What is the name of this obliging youth?" asked Sherlock Holmes.

"His name is Vincent Spaulding, and he's not such a youth either. It's hard to say his age. I should not wish a smarter assistant, Mr. Holmes; and I know very well that he could better himself, and earn twice what I am able to give him. But after all, if he is satisfied, why should I put ideas in his head?"

"Why, indeed? You seem most fortunate in having an employé who comes under the full market price. It is not a common experience among employers in this age. I don't know that your assistant is not as remarkable as your advertisement."

"Oh, he has his faults, too," said Mr. Wilson. "Never was such a fellow for photography. Snapping away with a camera when he ought to be improving his mind, and then diving down into the cellar like a rabbit into its hole to develop his pictures. That is his main fault; but, on the whole, he's a good worker. There's no vice in him."

"He is still with you, I presume?"

"Yes, sir. He and a girl of fourteen, who does a bit of simple cooking, and keeps the place clean—that's all I have in the house, for I am a widower, and never had any family. We live very quietly, sir, the three of us; and we keep a roof over our heads and pay our debts, if we do nothing more."

"The first thing that put us out was that advertisement. Spaulding, he came down into the office just this day eight weeks with this very paper in his hand, and he says:

" 'I wish to the Lord, Mr. Wilson, that I was a red-headed man.'

“ ‘Why that?’ I asks.

“ ‘Why,’ says he, ‘here’s another vacancy on the League of the Red-Headed Men.’

“ ‘Why, what is it, then?’ I asked.

“ ‘Have you never heard of the League of the Red-Headed Men?’ he asked, with his eyes open.

“ ‘Never.’

“ ‘Why, I wonder at that, for you are eligible yourself for one of the vacancies.’

“ ‘And what are they worth?’ I asked.

“ ‘Oh, merely a couple of hundred a year, but the work is

slight, and it need not interfere very much with one’s other occupations.’

“ ‘Well, you can easily think that that made me prick up my ears, for the business has not been over good for some years, and an extra couple of hundred would have been very handy.

“ ‘Tell me about it,’ said I.

“ ‘Well,’ said he, showing me the advertisement, ‘you can see for yourself that the League has a vacancy, and there is the address where you should apply for particulars. As far as I can make out, the League was founded by an American millionaire, Ezekiah Hopkins, who was very peculiar in his ways. He was himself red-headed, and he had a great sym-

pathy for all red-headed men; so, when he died, it was found that he had left his enormous fortune in the hands of trustees, with instructions to apply the interest to the providing of easy berths to men whose hair is of that color. From all I hear it is splendid pay, and very little to do.'

" 'But,' said I, 'there would be millions of red-headed men who would apply.'

" 'Not so many as you might think,' he answered. 'You see it is really confined to Londoners, and to grown men. This American had started from London when he was young, and he wanted to do the old town a good turn. Then, again, I have heard it is no use your applying if your hair is light red, or dark red, or anything but real, bright, blazing, fiery red. Now, if you care to apply, Mr. Wilson, you would just walk in; but perhaps it would hardly be worth your while to put yourself out of the way for the sake of a few hundred pounds.'

" 'Now, it is a fact, gentlemen, as you may see for yourselves, that my hair is of a very full and rich tint, so that it seemed to me that, if there was to be any competition in the matter, I stood as good a chance as any man that I had ever met. Vincent Spaulding seemed to know so much about it that I thought he might prove useful, so I just ordered him to put up the shutters for the day, and to come right away with me. He was very willing to have a holiday, so we shut the business up, and started off for the address that was given us in the advertisement.'

" 'I never hope to see such a sight as that again, Mr. Holmes. From north, south, east, and west every man who had a shade of red in his hair had tramped into the city to answer the advertisement. I should not have thought there were so many in the whole country as were brought together by that single advertisement. Every shade of color they were—straw, lemon, orange, brick, Irish-setter, liver, clay; but as Spaulding said, there were not many who had the real vivid flame-colored tint. When I saw how many were waiting, I would have given it up in despair; but Spaulding would not hear of it. How he did it I could not imagine, but he pushed and pulled and butted until he got me through the crowd, and right up to the steps which led to the office.'

" 'There was nothing in the office but a couple of wooden chairs and a deal table, behind which sat a small man, with a

head that was even redder than mine. He said a few words to each candidate as he came up, and then he always managed to find some fault in them which would disqualify them. Getting a vacancy did not seem to be such a very easy matter after all. However, when our turn came, the little man was much more favorable to me than to any of the others, and he closed the door as we entered, so that he might have a private word with us.

“ ‘This is Mr. Jabez Wilson,’ said my assistant, ‘and he is willing to fill a vacancy in the League.’

“ ‘And he is admirably suited for it,’ the other answered.

‘He has every requirement. I cannot recall when I have seen anything so fine.’ He took a step backwards, cocked his head on one side, and gazed at my hair until I felt quite bashful. Then suddenly he plunged forward, wrung my hand, and congratulated me warmly on my success.

“ ‘It would be injustice to hesitate,’ said he. ‘You will, however, I am sure, excuse me for taking an obvious precaution.’ With that he seized my hair in both his hands, and tugged until I yelled with the pain. ‘There is water in your eyes,’ said he, as he released me. ‘I perceive that all is as

it should be. But we have to be careful, for we have twice been deceived by wigs and once by paint. I could tell you tales of cobbler's wax which would disgust you with human nature.' He stepped over to the window and shouted through it at the top of his voice that the vacancy was filled. A groan of disappointment came up from below, and the folk all trooped away in different directions, until there was not a red head to be seen except my own and the manager's.

" 'My name,' said he, 'is Mr. Duncan Ross, and I am myself one of the pensioners upon the fund left by our noble benefactor.' .

" 'When shall you be able to enter upon your new duties?' .

" 'Well, it is a little awkward, for I have a business already,' said I.

" 'Oh, never mind about that, Mr. Wilson!' said Vincent Spaulding. 'I shall be able to look after that for you.'

" 'What would be the hours?' I ask.

" 'Ten to two.'

" 'Now a pawnbroker's business is mostly done of an evening, Mr. Holmes, especially Thursday and Friday evening, which is just before pay-day; so it would suit me very well to earn a little in the mornings. Besides, I knew that my assistant was a good man, and that he would see to anything that turned up.

" 'That would suit me very well,' said I. 'And the pay?'

" 'Is four pounds a week.'

" 'And the work?'

" 'Is purely nominal.'

" 'What do you call purely nominal?'

" 'Well, you have to be in the office, or at least in the building, the whole time. If you leave, you forfeit your whole position forever. The will is very clear upon that point. You don't comply with the conditions if you budge from the office during that time.'

" 'It's only four hours a day, and I should not think of leaving,' said I.

" 'No excuse will avail,' said Mr. Duncan Ross, 'neither sickness, nor business, nor anything else. There you must stay, or you lose your billet.'

" 'And the work?'

" 'Is to copy out the *Encyclopædia Britannica*. There is the first volume of it in that press. You must find your

own ink, pens and blotting-paper, but we provide this table and chair. Will you be ready to-morrow?'

" 'Certainly,' I answered.

" 'Then, good-bye, Mr. Jabez Wilson, and let me congratulate you once more on the important position which you have been fortunate enough to gain.' He bowed me out of the room, and I went home with my assistant, hardly knowing what to say or do, I was so pleased at my own good fortune.

" Well, I thought over the matter all day, and by evening I was in a low spirits again; for I had quite persuaded myself that the whole affair must be some great hoax or fraud, though what its object might be I could not imagine. It seemed altogether past belief that anyone could make such a will, or that they would pay such a sum for doing anything so simple as copying out the *Encyclopædia Britannica*. Vincent Spaulding did what he could to cheer me up, but by bedtime I had reasoned myself out of the whole thing. However, in the morning I determined to have a look at it anyhow, so I bought a penny bottle of ink, and with a quill pen, and seven sheets of foolscap paper, I started off for Pope's Court.

" Well, to my surprise and delight everything was as right as possible. The table was set ready for me, and Mr. Duncan Ross was there to see that I got fairly to work. He started me off upon the letter A, and then he left me; but he would drop in from time to time to see that all was right with me. At two o'clock he bade me good-day, complimented me upon the amount that I had written, and locked the door of the office after me.

" This went on day after day, Mr. Holmes, and on Saturday the manager came in and planked down four golden sovereigns for my week's work. It was the same next week, and the same the week after.

" Eight weeks passed away like this, and I had written about Abbots, and Archery, and Armour, and Architecture, and Attica, and hoped with diligence that I might get on to the B's before very long. It cost me something in foolscap, and I had pretty nearly filled a shelf with my writings. And then suddenly the whole business came to an end."

" To an end? "

" Yes, sir. And no later than this morning. I went to my work as usual at ten o'clock, but the door was shut and

locked, with a little square of card-board hammered on to the middle of the panel with a tack. Here it is, and you can read for yourself."

He held up a piece of white card-board, about the size of a sheet of note-paper. It read in this fashion:

"THE
RED-HEADED LEAGUE
IS DISSOLVED.
Oct. 9, 1890."

Sherlock Holmes and I surveyed this curt announcement and the rueful face behind it, until the comical side of the affair so completely overtopped every other consideration that we both burst out into a roar of laughter.

"I cannot see that there is anything very funny," cried our client, flushing up to the roots of his flaming head. "If you can do nothing better than laugh at me, I can go elsewhere."

"No, no," cried Holme, shoving him back into the chair from which he had half risen. "I really wouldn't miss your case for the world. It is most refreshingly unusual. But

there is, if you will excuse my saying so, something just a little funny about it. Pray what steps did you take when you found the card upon the door."

"I was staggered, sir. I did not know what to do. Then I called at the offices round, but none of them seemed to know anything about it. Finally, I went to the landlord, who is an accountant living on the ground floor, and I asked him if he could tell me what had become of the Red-Headed League. He said that he never heard of any such body. Then I asked him who Mr. Duncan Ross was. He answered that the name was new to him."

“ ‘Well,’ said I, ‘the gentleman at No. 4.’

“ ‘What, the red-headed man?’

“ ‘Yes.’

“ ‘Oh,’ said he, ‘his name was William Morris. He was a solicitor, and was using my room as a temporary convenience until his new premises were ready. He moved out yesterday.’

“ ‘Where could I find him?’

“ ‘Oh, at his new offices. He did tell me the address. Yes, 17, King Edward Street, near St. Paul’s.’

“ ‘I started off, Mr. Holmes, but when I got to that address it was a manufactory of artificial knee-caps, and no one in it had ever heard of either Mr. William Morris, or Mr. Duncan Ross.’

“ ‘And what did you do then?’ asked Holmes.

“ ‘I went home to Saxe-Coburg Square, and I took the advice of my assistant. But he could not help me in any way. He could only say that if I waited I should hear by post. But that was not quite good enough, Mr. Holmes. I did not wish to lose such a place without a struggle, so, as I had heard that you were good enough to give advice to poor folk who were in need of it, I came right away to you.’

“ ‘And you did very wisely,’ said Holmes. ‘Your case is an exceedingly remarkable one, and I shall be happy to look into it. From what you have told me I think that it is possible that graver issues hang from it than might at first sight appear.’

“ ‘Grave enough!’ said Mr. Jabez Wilson. ‘Why, I have lost four pounds a week.’

“ ‘As far as you are personally concerned,’ remarked Holmes, ‘I do not see that you have any grievance against this extraordinary league. On the contrary, you are, as I understand, richer by some thirty pounds, to say nothing of the minute knowledge which you have gained on every subject which comes under the letter A. You have lost nothing by them.’

“ ‘No, sir. But I want to find out about them, and who they are, and what their object was in playing this prank—if it was a prank—upon me. It was a pretty expensive joke for them, for it cost them two and thirty pounds.’

“ ‘We shall endeavor to clear up these points for you. And, first, one or two questions, Mr. Wilson. This assistant of

yours who first called your attention to the advertisement—how long had he been with you?”

“About a month then.”

“How did he come?”

“In answer to an advertisement.”

“Was he the only applicant?”

“No, I had a dozen.”

“Why did you pick him?”

“Because he was handy, and would come cheap.”

“At half wages, in fact.”

“Yes.”

“What is he like, this Vincent Spaulding?”

“Small, stout-built, very quick in his ways, no hair on his face, though he’s not short of thirty. Has a white splash of acid upon his forehead.”

Holmes sat up in his chair in considerable excitement. “I thought as much,” said he. “Have you ever observed that his ears are pierced for earrings?”

“Yes, sir. He told me that a gipsy had done it for him when he was a lad.”

“Hum!” said Holmes, sinking back in deep thought. “He is still with you?”

“Oh yes, sir; I have only just left him.”

“And has your business been attended to in your absence?”

“Nothing to complain of, sir. There’s never very much to do of a morning.”

“That will do, Mr. Wilson. I shall be happy to give you an opinion upon the subject in the course of a day or two. To-day is Saturday, and I hope that by Monday we may come to a conclusion.”

“Well, Watson,” said Holmes, when our visitor had left us, “what do you make of it all?”

“I make nothing of it,” I answered, frankly. “It is a most mysterious business.”

“As a rule,” said Holmes, “the more bizarre a thing is the less mysterious it proves to be. It is your commonplace, featureless crimes which are really puzzling, just as a commonplace face is the most difficult to identify. But I must be prompt over this matter.”

“What are you going to do then?” I asked.

“To smoke,” he answered. “It is quite a three-pipe problem, and I beg that you won’t speak to me for fifty

minutes." He curled himself up in his chair, with his thin knees drawn up to his hawk-like nose, and there he sat with his eyes closed and his black clay pipe thrusting out like the bill of some strange bird. I had come to the conclusion that he had dropped asleep, and indeed was nodding myself, when he suddenly sprang out of his chair with the gesture of a man who has made up his mind, and put his pipe down upon the mantelpiece.

"Sarasate plays at the St. James's Hall this afternoon," he remarked. "What do you think, Watson? Could your patients spare you for a few hours?"

"I have nothing to do to-day. My practice is never very absorbing."

"Then, put on your hat, and come. I am going through the city first, and we can have some lunch on the way. I observe that there is a good deal of German music on the programme, which is rather more to my taste than Italian or French. It is introspective, and I want to introspect. Come along!"

We traveled by the Underground as far as Aldersgate; and a short walk took us to Saxe-Coburg Square, the scene of the singular story which we had listened to in the morning. Three gilt balls and a brown board with "JABEZ WILSON" in white letters, upon a corner house, announced the place where our red-headed client carried on his business. Sherlock Holmes stopped in front of it with his head on one side, and looked it all over, with his eyes shining brightly between puckered lids. Then he walked slowly up the street, and then down again to the corner, still looking keenly at the houses. Finally he returned to the pawnbroker's, and, having thumped vigorously

upon the pavement with his stick two or three times, he went up to the door and knocked. It was instantly opened by a bright-looking, clean-shaven young fellow, who asked him to step in.

"Thank you," said Holmes, "I only wished to ask you how you would go from here to the Strand."

"Third right, fourth left," answered the assistant promptly, closing the door.

"Smart fellow, that," observed Holmes as we walked away. "He is, in my judgment, the fourth smartest man in London, and for daring I am not sure that he has not a claim to be third. I have known something of him before."

"Evidently," said I, "Mr. Wilson's assistant counts for a good deal in this mystery of the Red-Headed League. I am sure that you inquired your way merely in order that you might see him."

"Not him."


"What then?"

"The knees of his trousers."

"And what did you see?"

"What I expected to see."

"Why did you beat the pavement?"


"My dear doctor, this is a time for observation, not for talk. We are spies in an enemy's country. We know something of Saxe-Coburg Square. Let us now explore the parts which lie behind it."

"Let me see," said Holmes, standing at the corner, and glancing along the line, "I should like just to remember the order of the houses here. It is a hobby of mine to have an exact knowledge of London. There is Mortimer's, the tobacconist, the little newspaper shop, the Coburg branch of the City and Suburban Bank, the Vegetarian Restaurant, and McFarlane's carriage-building depot. That carries us right on to the other block. And now, doctor, we've done our work, so it's time we had some play.

My friend was an enthusiastic musician, being himself not

only a very capable performer, but a composer of no ordinary merit. All the afternoon he sat in the stalls wrapt in the most perfect happiness, gently waving his long thin fingers in time to the music, while his gently smiling face and his languid dreamy eyes were as unlike those of Holmes the sleuth-hound; Holmes the relentless, keen-witted, ready-handed criminal agent, as it was possible to conceive. In his singular character the dual nature alternately asserted itself, and his extreme exactness and astuteness represented, as I have often thought, the reaction against the poetic and contemplative mood which occasionally predominated in him. When I saw him that afternoon so enwrapped in the music at St. James's Hall I felt that an evil time might be coming upon those whom he had set himself to hunt down.

"You want to go home, no doubt, doctor," he remarked as we emerged.

"Yes, it would be as well."

"And I have some business to do which will take some hours. This business at Coburg Square is serious."

"Why serious?"

"A considerable crime is in contemplation. I have every reason to believe that we shall be in time to stop it. But to-day being Saturday rather complicates matters. I shall want your help to-night."

"At what time?"

"Ten will be early enough."

"I shall be at Baker Street at ten."

"Very well. And, I say, doctor! there may be some little danger, so kindly put your army revolver in your pocket." He waved his hand, turned on his heel, and disappeared in an instant among the crowd.

I trust that I am not more dense than my neighbors, but I was always oppressed with the sense of my own stupidity in

my dealings with Sherlock Holmes. Here I had heard what he had heard, I had seen what he had seen, and yet from his words it was evident that he saw clearly not only what had happened, but what was about to happen, while to me the whole business was still confused and grotesque.

It was a quarter past nine when I started from home and made my way across the park, and so through Oxford Street to Baker Street. Two hansoms were standing at the door, and, as I entered the passage, I heard the sound of voices from above. On entering his room, I found Holmes in animated conversation with two men, one of whom I recognized as Peter Jones, the official police agent; while the other was a long, thin, sad-faced man, with a very shiny hat and oppressively respectable frock-coat.

"Ha! our party is complete," said Holmes, buttoning up his pea-jacket, and taking his heavy hunting crop from the rack. "Watson, I think you know Mr. Jones, of Scotland Yard? Let me introduce you to Mr. Merryweather, who is to be our companion in to-night's adventure."

"We're hunting in couples again, doctor, you see," said Jones, in his consequential way. "Our friend here is a wonderful man for starting a chase. All he wants is an old dog to help him to do the running down."

"I hope a wild goose may not prove to be the end of our chase," observed Mr. Merryweather, gloomily.

"You may place considerable confidence in Mr. Holmes, sir," said the police agent, loftily. "He has his own little methods, which are, if he won't mind my saying so, just a little too theoretical and fantastic, but he has the makings of a detective in him. It is not too much to say that once or twice, as in that business of the Sholto murder and the Agra treasure, he has been more nearly correct than the official force."

"Oh, if you say all so, Mr. Jones, it is right!" said the stranger, with deference. "Still, I confess that I miss my rubber. It is the first Saturday night for seven-and-twenty years that I have not had my rubber."

"I think you will find," said Sherlock Holmes, "that you will play for a higher stake to-night than you have ever done yet, and that the play will be more exciting. For you, Mr. Merryweather, the stake will be some thirty thousand pounds; and for you, Jones, it will be the man upon whom you wish to lay your hands."

"John Clay, the murderer, thief, smasher and forger. He's a young man, Mr. Merryweather, but he is at the head of his profession, and I would rather have my bracelets on him than on any criminal in London. He's a remarkable man, is young John Clay. His grandfather was a royal duke, and he himself has been to Eton and Oxford. His brain is as cunning as his fingers, and though we meet signs of him at every turn, we never know where to find the man himself. He'll crack a crib in Scotland one week, and be raising money to build an orphanage in Cornwall the next. I've been on his track for years, and have never set eyes on him yet."

"I hope that I may have the pleasure of introducing you to-night. I've had one or two little turns also with Mr. John Clay, and I agree with you that he is at the head of his profession. It is past ten, however, and quite time that we started. If you two will take the first hansom, Watson and I will follow in the second."

We had reached the same crowded thoroughfare in which we had found ourselves in the morning. Our cabs were dismissed, and, following the guidance of Mr. Merryweather, we passed down a narrow passage, and through a side door, which he opened for us. Within there was a small corridor, which ended in a very massive iron gate. This also was opened, and led down a flight of winding stone steps, which terminated at another formidable gate. Mr. Merryweather stopped to light a lantern, and then conducted us down a dark, earth-smelling passage, and so, after opening a third door, into a huge vault or cellar, which was piled all round with crates and massive boxes.

"You are not very vulnerable from above," Holmes remarked, as he held up the lantern, and gazed about him.

"Nor from below," said Mr. Merryweather, striking his stick upon the flags which lined the floor. "Why, dear me, it sounds quite hollow!" he remarked, looking up in surprise.

"I must really ask you to be a little more quiet," said Holmes, severely. "You have already imperilled the whole success of our expedition. Might I beg that you would have the goodness to sit down upon one of these boxes, and not to interfere?"

The solemn Mr. Merryweather perched himself upon a crate, with a very injured expression upon his face, while Holmes fell upon his knees upon the floor, and, with the lan-

tern and a magnifying lens, began to examine minutely the cracks between the stones. A few seconds sufficed to satisfy him, for he sprang to his feet again, and put his glass in his pocket.

We are at present, doctor—as no doubt you have divined—in the cellar of the City branch of one of the principal London banks. Mr. Merryweather is the chairman of directors, and he will explain to you that there are reasons why the more daring criminals of London should take a consideration of this cellar at present."

"It is our French gold," said the director. "We have had several warnings that an attempt might be made upon it."

"Your French gold?"

"Yes. We had occasion some months ago to strengthen our resources, and borrowed, for that purpose, thirty thousand Napoleons from the Bank of France. It has become known that we have never had occasion to unpack the money, and that it is still lying in our cellar. The crate upon which I sit contains two thousand Napoleons packed between layers of lead foil. Our reserve of bullion is much larger at present than is usually kept in a single branch office, and the directors have had misgivings upon the subject."

"Which were very well justified," observed Holmes. "And now it is time that we arranged our little plans. I expect that within an hour matters will come to a head. In the meantime, Mr. Merryweather, we must put the screen over that dark lantern."

"And sit in the dark?"

"I am afraid so. I had brought a pack of cards in my pocket, and I thought that, as we were a *partie carrée*, you might have your rubber after all. But I see that the enemy's preparations have gone so far that we cannot risk the presence of a light. And, first of all, we must choose our positions. These are daring men, and, though we shall take them at a disadvantage they may do us some harm, unless we are careful. I shall stand behind this crate, and do you conceal yourself behind those. Then, when I flash a light upon them, close in swiftly. If they fire, Watson, have no compunction about shooting them down."

I placed my revolver, cocked, upon the top of the wooden case behind which I crouched. Holmes shot the slide across the front of his lantern, and left us in pitch darkness—such an absolute darkness as I have never before experienced. The smell of hot metal remained to assure us that the light was still there, ready to flash out at a moment's notice. To me, with my nerves worked up to a pitch of expectancy, there was something depressing and subduing in the sudden gloom, and in the cold, dank air of the vault.

"They have but one retreat," whispered Holmes. "That is back through the house into Saxe-Coburg Square. I hope that you have done what I asked you, Jones?"

"I have an inspector and two officers waiting at the front door."

"Then we have stopped all the holes. And now we must be silent and wait."

What a time it seemed! From comparing notes afterwards it was but an hour and a quarter, yet it appeared to me that the night must have almost gone, and the dawn be breaking above us. From my position I could look over the case in the direction of the floor.

Suddenly my eyes caught the glint of a light.

At first it was but a lurid spark upon the stone pavement. Then it lengthened out until it became a yellow line, and then, without any warning or sound, a gash seemed to open and a hand appeared, a white, almost womanly hand, which felt about in the centre of the little area of light. For a minute or more the hand, with its writhing fingers, protruded out of the floor. Then it was withdrawn as suddenly as it appeared,

and all was dark again save the single lurid spark, which marked a chink between the stones.

Its disappearance, however, was but momentary. With a rending, tearing sound, one of the broad, white stones turned over upon its side, and left a square, gaping hole, through which streamed the light of a lantern. Over the edge there peeped a clean-cut, boyish face, which looked keenly about it, and then, with a hand on either side of the aperture, drew itself shoulder high and waist high, until one knee rested

upon the edge. In another instant he stood at the side of the hole, and was hauling after him a companion, lithe and small like himself, with a pale face and a shock of very red hair.

"It's all clear," he whispered. "Have you the chisel and the bags. Great Scott! Jump, Archie, jump, and I'll swing for it!"

Sherlock Holmes had sprung out and seized the intruder by the collar. The other dived down the hole, and I heard the sound of rending cloth as Jones clutched at his skirts. The light flashed upon the barrel of a revolver, but Holmes' hunt-

ing crop came down on the man's wrist, and the pistol clinked upon the stone floor.

"It's no use, John Clay," said Holmes blandly, "you have no chance at all."

"So I see," the other answered, with the utmost coolness. "I fancy that my pal is all right, though I see you have got his coat-tails."

"There are three men waiting for him at the door," said Holmes.

"Oh, indeed. You seem to have done the thing very completely. I must compliment you."

"And I you," Holmes answered. "Your red-headed idea was very new and effective."

"You'll see your pal again presently," said Jones. "He's quicker at climbing down holes than I am. Just hold out while I fix the derbies."

"I beg that you will not touch me with your filthy hands," remarked our prisoner, as the handcuffs clattered upon his wrists. "You may not be aware that I have royal blood in my veins. Have the goodness also when you address me always to say 'sir' and 'please.'"

"All right," said Jones, with a stare and a snigger. "Well, would you please, sir, march upstairs, where we can get a cab to carry your highness to the police-station."

"That is better," said John Clay, serenely. He made a sweeping bow to the three of us, and walked quietly off in the custody of the detective.

"You see, Watson," Holmes explained, in the early hours of the morning, as we sat over a glass of whisky and soda in Baker Street, "it was perfectly obvious from the first that the only possible object of this rather fantastic business of the advertisement of the League, and the copying of the Encyclopædia, must be to get this not over-bright pawnbroker out of the way for a number of hours every day. It was a curious way of managing it, but really it would be difficult to suggest a better. The method was no doubt suggested to Clay's ingenious mind by the color of his accomplice's hair."

"But how could you guess what the motive was?"

"I thought of the assistant's fondness for photography, and his trick of vanishing into the cellar. The cellar! There was the end of this tangled clue. Then I made inquiries as

to this mysterious assistant, and found that I had to deal with one of the coolest and most daring criminals in London. He was doing something in the cellar—something which took many hours a day for months on end. What could it be, once more? I could think of nothing save that he was running a tunnel to some other building.

“So far I had got when we went to visit the scene of action. I surprised you by beating upon the pavement with my stick. I was ascertaining whether the cellar stretched out in front or behind. It was not in front. Then I rang the bell, and, as I hoped, the assistant answered it. We have had some skirmishes, but we had never set eyes upon each other before. I hardly looked at his face. His knees were what I wished to see. You must yourself have remarked how worn, wrinkled and stained they were. They spoke of those hours of burrowing. The only remaining point was what they were burrowing for. I walked round the corner, saw that the City and Suburban Bank abutted on our friend's premises, and felt that I had solved my problem. When you drove home after the concert I called upon Scotland Yard, and upon the chairman of the bank directors, with the result that you have seen.”

“And how could you tell that they would make their attempt to-night?” I asked.

“Well, when they closed their League offices that was a sign that they cared no longer about Mr. Jabez Wilson's presence, in other words, that they had completed their tunnel. But it was essential that they should use it soon as it might be discovered, or the bullion might be removed. Saturday would suit them better than any other day, as it would give them two days for their escape. For all these reasons I expected them to come to-night.”

“You reasoned it out beautifully,” I exclaimed in unfeigned admiration. “It is so long a chain, and yet every link rings true.”

“It saved me from *ennui*,” he answered, yawning. “Alas! I already feel it closing in upon me. My life is spent in one long effort to escape from the commonplaces of existence. These little problems help me to do so.”

“And you are a benefactor of the race,” said I.

He shrugged his shoulders. “Well, perhaps, after all, it is of some little use,” he remarked. “‘*L'homme c'est rien—l'œuvre c'est tout*,’ as Flaubert wrote to Georges Sand.”

A REGIMENTAL VALENTINE

BY JOHN STRANGE WINTER

A humorous story for St. Valentine's Day. From "Army Tales Lovell, Coryell & Company, publishers.

"Run?" said Patrick O'Shaughnassy, in answer to a question put to him, as he slipped into his chair at the early mess-dinner, just as the soup was being served—"run? B—y Jove! I should think I did run, as hard as ever I could lay legs to ground!"

"What made you so late, Pat?" inquired George De Lyle, the "senior sub.," next to whom he sat.

"Up at the colonel's. Mrs. Lifford had a lot of girls in to tea, and I couldn't get away," he answered. "Just had seven minutes to get here and dress in."

"Sharp thing, that. Why didn't you wait for the late dinner?"

"Concert down town; can't get off going."

"Did you try?" said De Lyle, slyly.

"Well, no," said the other, honestly, "I didn't."

Mr. De Lyle laughed, and when, after a hurried meal, Pat O'Shaughnassy rose from the table, remarked to his neighbor on his other hand that "it really is an awful pity, but Pat, poor devil, is going the way of all the others."

"What way's that?" said the man in question, who, being brother to one of the officers, and only a visitor in barracks, did not understand the allusion; "I don't see any thing amiss with him."

"I'll tell you," answered De Lyle. "You must know that the colonel is guardian to a niece who is immensely rich and very pretty, but the most terrible flirt in creation. Well, whenever a young fellow joins, it is the part of the programme that he shall go through a course of instruction at Miss Lifford's hands. They all do, just as children have the measles and the whooping-cough."

"And how old is Miss Lifford?"

"Oh, perhaps two-and-twenty; and really the very nicest girl you ever met. She takes them all in hand, and, somehow, contrives to keep good friends with them, even after they've got their dismissal. Now, the joke is, that Pat O'Shaughnassy has known her ever since she left school; and

as he stands second on the list of subs., he might reasonably be expected to know better. Within the last few weeks he has literally lived to the tune of Alys Lifford. The days he is on duty he is an absolute nuisance to every one; indeed, I am obliged to lock my door against him. And yet, do you know, I'm sorry for him, for he's a downright good sort of chap."

An hour later the regular mess-dinner was in full swing, when suddenly Captain Gurney asked, "What had got Pat O'Shaughnassy?"

"The old game," answered a voice from the other end of the table.

"Silly fool!" remarked the senior captain, with great contempt.

"He's not been polished off quite so soon as they usually are," observed Jack Hilton. "I should have thought Miss Lifford would have got sick of him by this time."

"Don't know," laughed another. "Pat's very amusing sometimes. I heard a lady ask him at St. Hilary's wedding, whether his name was pronounced O'Shanassy or O'Shaucknassy, as she knew both families. Pat told her with the most barefaced coolness, that he wasn't an Irishman at all; he came from Kent."

"Awfully good!" cried a chorus of laughing voices.

"Ah, but he said a neater thing than that," put in Jack Hilton. "One day last week Miss Lifford asked us to go into tea on Sunday afternoon; and Pat said gravely, "I think I will be on duty, but I'll come if I can; but if I don't come you won't expect me."

This raised another laugh. Most of my readers are probably aware that it does not take much to provoke mirth and hilarity at a military dinner-table.

"By George!" suddenly exclaimed Captain Gurney, "this is the 12th, surely. We must send Pat a valentine!"

"So we must!" cried the others.

"I wonder if Miss Lifford will send him one?" said Fred Gordon.

"Not she. Suppose we send him one for her."

"So we will. What shall it be? Holloa, Gurney! what have you got in your head now?"

For the senior captain was leaning with both elbows on the table, his face buried in his hands. Presently he raised it.

"Wait a minute, you fellows," he said slowly. "Pat's on duty to-morrow, isn't he?"

"Yes."

"Then we'll write a proposal from him to Miss Lifford, and send a note by an orderly; her answer, which is safe to be a refusal, will be a grand surprise for him on St. Valentine's day."

This daring proposition was received in silence; the officers of the 52d Dragoons looked from one to another in speechless amazement, mingled with admiration for the mastermind which had conceived this brilliant plot.

At length Fred Gordon relieved his feelings by a prolonged "B—y Jove!" and then the whole assembly broke out into a torrent of eager questions.

"Will it be safe?"

"You'll tell us exactly what to say to Pat?"

"You'll write as if from him?"

"I suppose she is quite sure to refuse him?" said Jack Hilton, doubtfully.

"Safe to," replied Captain Gurney, confidently, "it will be the best joke we have had since St. Hilary got spliced.

"Who will write it?" said George Wintringham; "because it must be done carefully, and made spoony enough."

"I'll write the rough copy," replied Captain Gurney, "and then we must get hold of some of Pat's writing to imitate."

"You need not do that," announced Fred Gordon; "Billy Childers writes exactly the same fist as Pat."

"Are you sure?"

"Perfectly certain; I don't think even Pat himself could tell the difference; and Miss Lifford will not be so familiar with his handwriting as all that."

By the united efforts of the officers the following letter was produced:

"CAVALRY BARRACKS, MILCHESTER, February 13th.

MY DEAR MISS LIFFORD—I have been trying for some time to speak to you on a subject which lies very near my heart; but, somehow, I have never had the opportunity. I am not much of a hand at letter-writing, but I think you must know what I mean. Will you marry me, darling? That I love you with all my heart and soul, you must have known for some time, and, faith, I can't help thinking you do care a little for me.

"I am fast all day in this dreary barrack square, so won't you send me one little word to say you will be my valentine to-morrow? and make the very happiest man in the world into

PATRICK O'SHAUGHNASSY.

Captain Gurney read this brilliant production aloud.

"There!" he exclaimed, in a self-satisfied tone, "I think that reads like Pat, particularly the wind-up. Can any of you suggest an improvement?"

There was a general reply in the negative; they all considered it beyond improving.

"One of you run up to Pat's room and get some of his own paper, it will be in the blotting-book on the writing-table—don't bring that with the regiment crest on; bring his own."

Fred Gordon said he would go. He very soon returned with the spoils, and the letter was copied and ready for sending in no time.

The following day Captain Gurney sent an orderly to Colonel Lifford's house with the letter, and after some little time the man returned, with a note directed in Alys Lifford's bold handwriting to P. O'Shaughnassy, Esq. According to orders, he took it to Captain Gurney's room, where several of the conspirators were waiting to receive it. Their senior, however, locked it up, out of harm's way, saying:

"I suppose a lot of young fools like you would be tearing it open, because your curiosity could not wait till another day; but I'll have none of that nonsense. No, here it stays until I post it, and you will see it opened, with the others, tomorrow at luncheon."

"Are you going to post it?" said Billy Childers, in amazement.

"Why of course, you young duffer; you don't suppose I'm going to give it to Pat, do you? Lord bless the child, he's as innocent as a serpent! If it were not posted Pat would smell a rat directly, and never believe it came from Miss Lifford at all."

The answer was accordingly posted; and on the following day, as usual, on the feast of St. Valentine, all the letters were saved until luncheon, at which meal the officers were assembled to enjoy the fun.

"Here's one for you, Chim," said Patrick O'Shaughnassy, taking a packet from the heap; "come, open it out, man, and let us see."

The packet contained a lady's long fur ruff, and a very official-looking note, purporting to have come from the commanding officer of the 90th Hussars (for Mr. Drew had only a few months before exchanged into the 52d from that regiment), to the effect that the caudal appendage had been

found in Sub-Lieutenant Drew's quarters, and was therefore forwarded, with a request that any other such property which Mr. Drew might have left behind should be at once removed, otherwise his late quarters in ——— Barracks would be seriously incommoded.

Mr. Drew might certainly have passed for the missing link we hear so much about, and his regimental cognomen of Chimpanzee, more often shortened into Chim, suited his personal appearance to a nicety. As usual, he had to laugh off his chagrin with the best grace he could muster, when, happily for him, the general attention was diverted from him, as Patrick O'Shaughnassy carelessly picked up from the heap on the table the delicately-perfumed, crested note which was to convey such startling news to him. He did not dream that it came from Miss Lifford, and turned it over with infinite contempt.

"Ugh!" said he, "an afternoon tea, I suppose. 'My *dear* Captain O'Shaughnassy'—ah, I know their little ways."

"For the love of Heaven, don't sit driveling there, man!" cried an impatient voice.

"Oh, it isn't a valentine," remarked another, in a disappointed tone, when O'Shaughnassy took out a note and began reading it.

"Go on with the others," said Gurney, in order to avert suspicion; a command which no one obeyed, all being too busy watching Pat, amid a silence which had become quite oppressive.

"What the d——" began he, then checked himself, and, turning the paper over, read it again, changing color the while from scarlet to white, then from white to scarlet, as though he could not make up his mind which was most becoming to his complexion, finally compromised the matter by remaining the color of a mangel-wurzel. He picked up the envelope and examined it; then he took up the letter again carefully.

"Well," he said, at last, surveying the eager faces crowding round him "you chaps have got yourselves into a fine shindy this time, no mistake about it."

"What is it? what does she say?" they cried, as with one voice.

"Upon my——" he began.

'Here, give it to me,' said Gurney, who began to suspect

Pat was right, and they had got into a "shindy" as he said—"give it to me," at the same time snatching it out of his hands, and reading it quickly.

It was not a very long epistle, but its contents elicited an oath, not loud, but deep, between the reader's closed teeth.

"I told you so," said Pat, reassuringly.

"What is it?" cried the others; "she has not, surely, accepted you?"

O'Shaughnassy nodded.

"Oh, well, it's all right, then," said Gordon, in a relieved tone. "Pat's got all he wants, and she need never know anything at all about it; a very good thing for Pat, I say."

"Perhaps Pat says the contrary," interposed that young gentleman. "I've not asked Miss Lifford to marry me, and, what is more, I am not going to do so. I don't intend to marry a woman simply to get you fellows out of a scrape. No, no; Pat O'Shaughnassy may be a thundering fool, but he's not quite such an idiot as to do that."

"Why, Pat," exclaimed Jack Hilton, "we all thought that you were 'dead nuts' on Miss Lifford."

"Did you, really? Well, all I've got to say is, that you've got yourselves into a pretty shindy this time, and won't there be Old Harry to pay when the chief comes home! By Jove! I wouldn't stand in your shoes for a good sum. Perhaps, after this, you will be leaving your neighbor's private affairs alone."

"Dash it all!" snapped Gurney, "why can't you marry Miss Lifford, and have done with it? You've been dangling after her morning, noon and night, for weeks."

"To tell you the truth, my dear fellows," said Mr. O'Shaughnassy, with slow deliberation of utterance, "to tell you the honest truth—I *am already engaged to be married!*"

If the hero of this little history had suddenly emptied a pail of iced water over the group of officers assembled in the messroom of the Milchester Barracks, a more perceptible shiver could not have run through them. Not a word was spoken. The brave men who would have cheered their troops on against an enemy, or faced grim death without a sign of flinching, looked in one another's faces blankly, each asking a tacit question, "What are we to do?" receiving for an answer, "I'm dashed if I know!"

In their midst stood Patrick O'Shaughnassy, taller, by

some inches, than any of them; his arms carelessly crossed upon his broad chest; his good-humored face wearing a pleasant smile and his gray eyes—real Irish eyes they were—shining with mirth. At last the smile deepened into a laugh, which displayed strong, white, filbert-shaped teeth.

“Well, as I said before, gentlemen, you’ve got yourselves into a pretty shindy.”

“No one can compliment you on the pleasing variety of your remarks,” sneered Captain Gurney; “that’s the fourth time you’ve made that brilliant observation.”

“So it is. Well, Gurney, you’ve a very good opportunity of showing your wonderful cleverness,” said Pat, who could afford to be civil, “and letting the world see if you are as clever at getting out of scrapes yourself as you are of getting other fellows in. When you’ve got the thing settled, I’ll change the ‘into’ into ‘out,’ and say it as many times again. I’m going now. I shouldn’t like my presence to be any hindrance to the general conversation. Good-bye.”

With a gay laugh O’Shaughnassy went noisily out of the room, and ran quickly up the echoing corridor to his own domain. Safely there, he immediately locked the door, and flinging himself on the bed, indulged in the luxury of a hearty laugh, rolling over and over, burying his face in the pillows to smother the sound of his hilarity. At last he calmed down a little, and, smoothing out Miss Lifford’s letter, which he had recaptured from Captain Gurney, read it again with care. I mentioned before that it was not lengthy; indeed, it ran thus:

“You have made me happy—very happy, indeed, Of course I will be your valentine to-morrow. Whose should I be, if not yours?

“Always your own,

“ALYS.”

Mr. Patrick O’Shaughnassy kissed the crumpled paper rapturously.

“My darling, my sweet Alys!” he murmured, blissfully. Then his more natural mode of expressing his satisfaction came in the words, “By Jove! what a lucky chap I am!”

Could Mr. O’Shaughnassy be alluding to the young lady about whom there had been so much discussion below?

His next movement was to change his uniform for plain clothes; and, after locking Miss Lifford’s note in a secure place, to light a cigar, and proceed to search among the chaos

on the table for a pair of gloves. While he was thus employed, some one tried to open the door.

"Come in!" roared Pat. "Come in, you fool, can't you? Oh, the door's locked, is it? Well, old man," as Jack Hilton came in, "what's up now?"

"'Pon my word," began Jack, dolefully, "how the deuce we are to get out of this business I don't know; I've a good mind to send in my papers at once."

"About the best thing you can do," said Pat, consolingly, and still continuing his search; "and as you are going to be married, it won't make much odds to you."

"By George! but Gurney is in a funk."

"And so should I be," said Pat, "if I were in his shoes—a confounded fool! It's to be hoped this will cure him. Well, now," having found the gloves, "I must be off; ta-ta!"

"Stop, stop!" cried Hilton; "where are you going? To the colonel's?"

"Now, my good fellow, do you expect me to go and patch up your damages just by being asked?"

"Oh, Lord! I didn't know; you always do go there."

"If it's any satisfaction to you to know it, I'm going into Milchester."

"To meet Miss Lifford?" said Hilton, eagerly, like a drowning man to catch at the weakest straw.

"I am not going to Miss Lifford?" said Pat, looking back at the door, and closing it just in time to escape a missile, in the shape of a boot, which Mr. Hilton flung at his head. Ah, it is only in a university or a barrack that one man can go into another man's room and fling his boots at his head without provoking offense. Truly there is something of Arcadia in both places!

When Patrick O'Shaughnassy told Jack Hilton he was going into Milchester, he was speaking sober truth; for into that most dreary of dreary towns he really did go. At the first stand, however, he took a cab, and pulling up the blind windows, ordered the man to drive to Colonel Lifford's. The chief's house was in the centre of a village about a mile and a half from Milchester, on the road which led past the barracks.

Having satisfied himself by a peep from the little window at the back, that none of the officers were in sight, he slipped out, telling the driver to come back in an hour, and answer no questions.

He found Alys Lifford sitting alone in the drawing-room, and as she sprung up with pretty eagerness to him, took her bodily into his arms.

"My darling! My best and dearest!"

For some time their conversation was not rational, nor, indeed, was it fluent. Then Patrick, feeling that "life is short and time is fleeting," set about broaching to Miss Lifford the subject which was just then occupying the attention of the gentlemen in the Milchester Barracks.

"My darling," he began, with a cough, "you got a note from me yesterday?"

Miss Lifford raised her head from his shoulder and regarded him with blank amazement.

"Of course I did, and answered it. You didn't write to me again, did you?"

"I didn't write at all," blurted out Pat.

"Did not write at all? What do you mean? Are you mad, Mr. O'Shaughnassy?"

"Well, it was 'them.' I knew nothing at all about it till I got your letter this morning."

"*Them?*" repeated Alys, slowly, unconsciously using Pat's ungrammatical form of speech. "Did they write the letter I got yesterday?"

"Yes, confound them!"

"And did they see my answer?"

"I could not help it," said Pat, humbly. "What was one against so many? You won't be angry with me, will you, my darling?"

"Captain Gurney and Mr. Hilton," said a servant, opening the door.

Alys Lifford came forward as the two men walked into the room.

"I never, in my life, heard of such an ungentlemanly, disgraceful action, never. I could not have believed it possible. Unmanly, cowardly!" she cried, passionately, though the sound of tears was in her voice. "I do not know which of you is the worst or the most to be blamed; but as surely as I am Alys Lifford, I will never speak to any of you again."

She vanished into an inner room, and the three men stood as if turned to stone. All the color faded from Patrick O'Shaughnassy's ruddy face, leaving it as white as death. He

crossed the room to where his senior was standing, and gripped his shoulder with trembling fingers.

"As I live, I'll pay you out for this fine trick," he said, in a low voice, shaking with suppressed passion. "You shall live to repent it, confound you!"

Then he stalked out of the room without another word.

"I shall send in my papers at once," said Jack Hilton, in the tone of a martyr. "As for you, Gurney, you had better shoot yourself."

"Umph!" said Captain Gurney, doubtfully.

A week passed away, and still Colonel Lifford did not return from his leave. The officers of the 52d, during that time, went through various stages of misery.

Occasionally they displayed symptoms of swaggering bravado, but they neither deceived themselves nor each other; and the general tone of society in the mess-room might be fairly described as "hang-dog." Colonel Lifford was a martinet of the very fiercest caliber, and the dread with which his return was anticipated was simply pitiable.

The state of Mr. O'Shaughnassy's temper did not add to the general hilarity of the community. As George De Lyle expressed it, "Pat was for all the world like a bear with a sore head."

None of them ventured into his room, nor, indeed, said a word to him on any subject whatever, except one or two who were not involved in the scrape.

Jack Hilton kept his word and sent in his papers, so, consequently, felt a little more at his ease than his comrades; and Miss Lifford kept her word, and "cut" the whole of them, which was, as Thorold told her, an awful shame, on the strength of which she made an exception in his favor, and flirted with him in a disgraceful manner. For poor Patrick O'Shaughnassy she had no mercy. At the cathedral, palace, or theatre, and at all other places where they met, she did not deign to notice him in the least, though he, poor fellow, as all his comrades knew, tried again and again to soften her wrath.

At the end of a week the news came that Colonel Lifford had fallen in the hunting-field and broken his arm. I'm afraid his officers were not so sorry as they should have been; but the accident meant to them a respite, and when Mrs. and

Miss Lifford departed to join the sick man, they fell back into their old ways and breathed freely once more.

Patrick O'Shaughnassy's ill-temper, however, increased visibly, and after a fortnight not very pleasantly passed, he announced that he had got a month's leave, and was going to be married.

"Going to be married!" cried the officers in chorus. "Why, Pat, we all thought ———"

"What business had you to think, then?" retorted Pat, it must be owned somewhat uncourteously. "I can't stand this any longer; so I'm going to get married, and see if that will mend it."

At the door he fired a parting shot.

"And I hope you'll find it pretty warm when the chief comes back."

"Selfish brute!" remarked Captain Gurney, when he had gone.

"Poor devil!" commented De Lyle. "I never thought Pat would have taken it so much to heart. Anyway, I do pity the girl."

The weeks slipped away and still Colonel Lifford was absent; his broken arm proved very troublesome, and he had received such a shaking from his fall that his medical advisers forbade his returning to duty for some time. At length he was able to do so, and the major announced that he might be expected on the 7th of the month, during the week that the Yeomanry Cavalry were assembled in Milchester for their annual training. This news filled the gallant officers anew with dismay and consternation. They were in "no end of a funk, by Jove." And when it was reported that he had arrived in town, and did not make his appearance in the barrack, it was considered a very bad sign, from which they inferred that his wrath was indeed terrible.

While this black state of affairs was being discussed in the ante-room, Patrick O'Shaughnassy walked in, looking as bright and jolly as if he had never had a trouble in his life.

"I hear the chief's back to-day," he said, with a hearty laugh. "I suppose you men are all quaking in your shoes!"

No one answered, and there was silence until Gordon said that they understood he had gone away to be married.

"So I did," he answered.

"And didn't it come off? We never saw any announcement."

"Come off? Of course it did. The missus is down at the Royal Swan."

"Who is she?" asked Billy Childers.

"Who is she? Why, Mrs. O'Shaughnassy, of course."

"Shall we see her at the ball those yeomanry fellows give to-night?"

"Oh, yes. Good-bye. Wish you good luck for to-morrow."

A few hours later the officers of the dragoons went out into the brilliantly lighted ball-room.

"Do you think the O'Shaughnassys have come?" said De Lyle to one of the hosts.

"Yes, half an hour ago at least. What a pretty girl she is! You'll see them somewhere about," said he, and moved away.

"There's Pat," said Gurney; "and, by the Lord Harry, he's dancing with Alys Lifford! What does that mean?"

"She looks happy enough, and better friends than Pat's wife will like if she hears the story."

"Oh, she will never hear it. Pat isn't such a fool as to tell her himself. I wonder which she is?"

"There's Pat. I say, Pat, aren't you going to introduce us to your wife?"

"Oh, yes, to be sure. Come along."

He led them across the room to where a lady, dressed in the richest bridal costume, was talking with other ladies.

"My darling, here are some of my brother-officers come to make your acquaintance," he said. "Captain Gurney and Mr. Gordon—Mrs. O'Shaughnassy."

To their unspeakable astonishment Mrs. O'Shaughnassy had the dark eyes, the profile, and the smiling mouth of Alys Lifford.

"Why, Miss Lifford!" gasped young Gordon. "I—I—you—at least——"

"Ah," she laughed, "you are thinking of the tragic vow I made the day I found you out. Well, I have kept it. I am not Alys Lifford now, you know."

"And I think I kept mine," laughed her husband joyously. "I think I paid you all out. Oh, did we not steal a march upon you? I can tell you, though, it was precious hard work keeping up the sulks."

ETCHING: PRO MEMORIÁ

BY MAIDIE E. BARNITZ

A death in the desert. Written for Short Stories—Copyrighted.
Illustrated by A. Weil.

The eternal prairies stretching away—beyond the ken of time and space, and out of the barren flatness a naked, purple mountain rising abruptly, as if to say: "With God all things are possible."

This, and in the shadow of this great rock in the weary

land, a handful of low stone and adobe buildings, constituting a one-company Arizonian post.

They stood together in the early morning, he and she, where the earth was coolest by the mountain; their hands were interclasped, but there was no need of speech between them; they read each other's thoughts. He was making a tremendous effort to appear composed in the presence of his men, she was strangely calm.

The fifty bronzed soldiers drawn up stiffly, with arms reversed, in regulation fashion, had, moved by a common impulse, uncovered their heads and relapsed into more than disciplined silence.

As the flag was lifted from the tiny casket the wailing funeral dirge ceased, and a voice, purer, gentler, bore on the refrain so tenderly that the words of the burial service fell without pain, even on the ears of mourning.

"Thy will be done." The voice grew tremulous, faltered and stopped, and the men finished their work of filling up the grave in silence, rolling a boulder above it to mark the spot.

Then the terrible, merciless sun came out in the land of the Lachalatos, withering every intimation of green life, and converting the hard alkaline soil into a furnace.

The prairie dogs went back to their holes, the men to the barracks, and over the waste a bugle for guard mounting sounded sweet, and wild, and clear—and the duties of the day had commenced.

The commanding officer and his wife walked back to their quarters, where she busied herself collecting and locking away in a drawer numerous dainty garments, a broken doll and a woolly lamb that had outlived their usefulness.

A PAIR OF DRAMATISTS

By A. VON WINTERFIELD

An amusing tale of the fortunes of two struggling playwrights

In dear old Berlin there lived two playwrights. The one was called Barsewisch, the other Blitzenberg.

As soon as these two set eyes on each other, they felt a mutual attraction, swore eternal brotherhood over sundry glasses of beer, took rooms in common, and made up a common purse for their common expenses.

Before their alliance each had regarded himself as an unappreciated genius, not yet understood by a thankless world. Now, however, relying on the mathematical truth that two negatives make a positive, they believed that they would attain a flattering recognition.

It is well known that every poet must have a sweetheart to understand him, to inspire his thoughts, to kindle his fancy, and to fill his heart with those gentle tones that in union with his more masculine notes may produce the harmony every dramatic work should possess.

Barsewisch and Blitzenberg, then, had their sweethearts. This fact, however, each had kept secret to such an extent that neither had ever caught sight of the other's lady-love.

One of the ladies was called Tina; she was a member of the National Theatre Company: the other was named Lena, and she played in a minor theatre under an assumed name.

After the partnership of our two poets was established, things went on for the most part as before; all the pieces they concocted together were returned by the various theatre managers, and their system of living out of a common purse soon reduced itself to a system of common credit, and finally to common impecuniosity. In this desperate condition the two friends resolved to shake off the load of the earthly and hasten to that undiscovered land from whose bourne no traveller returns.

This very day their double suicide was to take place. The two poets sat in their rooms, each making his last will and testament.

Let us first visit Barsewisch, look over his shoulder, and see what he writes:

"I blame no one for my premature departure; I kill myself of my own free impulse, and because it gives me especial pleasure so to do. All my debts I leave to my common landlady, with the prayer that she will keep them sacred and make no bad use of them.

"But, O Tina, unspeakably beautiful Tina, what will you say when you hear of my cruel death? Would that I could see thee when in unutterable sorrow thou tearest thy dark raven hair—then wilt thou be divinely beautiful!"

Dipping his pen in the inkstand, he was preparing to make further testamentary dispositions, when the door suddenly opened and Blitzenberg entered the room, his hair picturesquely disordered.

"Life on earth is like a sojourn in a hotel," said he, "where the rent of rooms is so dear that one cannot blame the poor guest if he quietly slips out and seeks death in the compassionate river; a lodging rather damp perhaps, but quite inexpensive. Ah! Is that you, Barsewisch? Busy on our last act?"

Barsewisch contemptuously shrugged his shoulders.

"I—still writing for the theatre!" he exclaimed. "Far from it. I was drawing up my last will."

"You remain, then, true to your resolve?"

"Certainly, my friend. To-night we go hence—Our last day!" he went on in declamatory tones; "how the sick breast dilates at this holy thought! Bound by friendship to work together, hissed together in every theatre, we now go together, the darksome road to the home of eternal Light."

"What has been the use of all our work?" queried the other, more discontented but less pathetic. "What was the good of our taking rooms in the houses where Lessing and Schiller once dwelt? None at all! People may say it hurt us. Envy and ignorance were not idle in sharpening their poisoned arrows against us, and so it has happened that our masterpiece, 'Fallen Angels,' had a worse fall in the National Theatre."

"Oh! still echo in my ears the shrill hissings and whistlings from key and cat-call," said Barsewisch; "the scorn of the ungrateful public still rends my heart-strings. No—no

—we cannot survive our disgrace, Blitzenberg; we must die—die—die!”

“And this night is really to be our last, then?” replied the other, “Well, so be it! I should like, however, to be able to see to-morrow what the papers will say about us. ‘Two meritorious young poets’—when a man is dead, he is always *meritorious*—‘two opening buds of talent who have not seldom been damned at the National and other theatres, have voluntarily put an end to their lives during the past night. Details in next edition.’”

“I think we had better choose as the key for the gate to the next world the revolver we bought to protect ourselves against robbers,” Barsewisch now suggested.

A bitter smile spread over Blitzenberg’s countenance.

“Useless precaution,” he said. “What fanciful ideas one used to have? But how do you propose to arrange our exit?”

“First, let us take a good lunch. It is a long way to the darksome Styx.”

“You are quite right—one cannot go to sleep hungry. Look lively, friend Barsewisch, and bring in the needful!”

“But we have no money!”

“Hang it up, as usual!”

“But if we are going to die to-night—”

“The more reason—a good excuse for not paying. Away with you, Barsewisch; do your best, never mind the expense. One does not die every day, old friend.”

“Well! I will see what we can do.” With these words Barsewisch put on their joint-stock hat, brushed his coat and left the room—that room whose shelter would so soon be indifferent to him.

When Blitzenberg was alone, he began to pace up and down with long strides, for sad thoughts occupied his mind.

He sat down at last near the window and pulled out of his pocket a crumpled letter. Although he had read it so often that he knew it by heart, still this letter seemed to possess a lively interest for him.

He unfolded it, and for the twentieth time muttered its contents:

“DEAR WALDEMAR:—Everybody in our theatre has great hopes of ‘Fallen Angels,’ and believes it will draw the town. All the world knows what genius you have, but unfortunately your collaborator is so stupid that he spoils your most talented creations. Au revoir; with a thousand kisses, your faithful
TINA.”

After he had perused this document Blitzenberg stuck it into his pocket, and raised his clenched fist to heaven in the most approved tragic fashion.

"These are the twin causes of my mournful death," he exclaimed, "the stupidity of my partner and the faithlessness of my Tina. It is incredible; he kills all the characters in our plays into which I have laboriously breathed a breath of life, and she—it tortures my soul to say it—she, the most deceiving of all deceivers, was seen in the Vienna bakery—with a gentleman—and it was not with me. But she is quite right about Barsewisch; he is a blockhead. Of course, I have not shown him this letter, because I do not want to make him feel bad. If he had the faintest notion of this, he would be even more miserable than he is."

He could not go on with his monologue because he heard his friend coming up the stairs.

"Here we are again!" cried Barsewisch, dragging a big basket into the room. "Help me to unpack, and pull out the table."

Blitzenberg did as he was requested, put a couple of chairs at the table, and then with greedy hands dived into the basket. His first prize was a mighty sausage, then he produced some cold veal, a pound of butter, a Dutch cheese, and two bottles of Rhine wine.

"You have done well, Barsewisch," cried Blitzenberg. "Let us eat and drink to our heart's content. One can die easily when one is in good spirits."

Then they took their places and filled their glasses.

"A pleasant journey," said Barsewisch, clinking his glass.

Next they attacked the eatables for a full half-hour without saying a word. Barsewisch, who was not so fond of material comforts as his friend, was the first to stop stuffing himself.

"If you are ready," he then said, "lend me your ear—"

"I will lend you anything," was the reply. "Anything—that is, but money."

"Are you ready, then!"

"I am—speak."

"The moment has now arrived," began Barsewisch, "when we must have no secrets between us."

"Of course, of course, dear boy."

"You know," he continued, "that there is a maiden to whom I am devoted with my whole soul."

"Like me, old fellow, like me."

"But what you do not know, dear Blitzenberg, is the appalling fact, that my Tina has deceived me. She was seen one evening with another man."

"Just like me, old fellow, just like me."

"Just like you? You, too!"

"Yes, alas, yes! My Lena has deserted me. This is the main reason why I am resolved to die."

"Just my case, just my case!"

"Then I am sorry for you, my friend," continued Barsewisch, while he drew a crumpled letter out of his pocket; "but it is some comfort to know that we are *both* deceived. You shall know my inmost heart. Listen to my Lena's last letter:

" 'Dear Eginhard:—You must send me tickets for your first night. I am glad to hear it will be produced. All the world knows what genius you have; but your partner—' "

Here he paused as if reluctant to read further.

"Go on," cried Blitzenberg.

"Why, really, I cannot, I don't like—."

"Between friends like us! Go on, I pray."

"Well, then, 'but your partner is such a donkey.' "

Blitzenberg looked astonished.

"Very curious," he thought; "the very same idea!"

They were both silent for a while and looked with pity on each other.

"Dear friend, what is life?" at last Barsewisch resumed, while a tear trembled in his dark eye.

"Ah, what is it?" responded Blitzenberg, in tears.

"And what is love?"

"Speak no more of love, speak of noble friendship."

"You are right. Let us speak only of friendship." Hereupon they embraced each other.

"Are we not the Siamese twins of ill-luck?" cried Barsewisch.

"Alas, yes," his friend replied, in tragic tones. "We have borne all things together, together we will fling ourselves into the soft, dark arms of death!"

"Have we not some time left?"

"Well as we have had our supper, it seems to me that there is nothing more to be done—."

Here a knock at the door made them both start from their chairs.

"What can it be?" asked Barsewisch.

"A letter, perhaps. They'll push it under the door."

"Yes, there it is. I have not the courage to pick it up."

Blitzenberg picked it up. "From the Victoria Theatre," he cried. "Open it and read it at once."

Barsewisch did so. "'Gentlemen,'" he read, "'I am happy to say, that your grand spectacular piece has been accepted by the management—'"

"Hurrah!" shouted Blitzenberg.

"Saved! Saved!" cried the other, dancing about. "Read on, read on!"

"'The manager takes the liberty of adding some conditions, namely, that the authors engage to provide scenery and costumes, and to pay the actors, orchestra, carpenters, and scene-shifters, as long as the piece runs.'"

Barsewisch let the letter drop. At this moment the dull sound of one o'clock echoed through the room.

"It's our last hour!" said Barsewisch.

"Nonsense. It is the professor's clock up-stairs. It is always half an hour too fast."

They were silent for a few minutes.

"I have an idea," said Blitzenberg.

"Out with it!" replied Barsewisch.

"As we have only one revolver—"

"True."

"And cannot shoot each other at the same time—"

"Well—"

"Let us toss up."

No sooner said than done. Barsewisch was the winner."

"You have won," said Blitzenberg. "How I envy you!"

"What! Have I won?"

"Certainly. You will have the happiness of dying by the hand of your friend. I congratulate you."

"Well—but you see—I'm not selfish—not a bit," said Barsewisch. "I won't take advantage of my luck. I'll leave it to you. Give me the revolver, and *you*, my dear, dear friend, shall experience the pleasure of dying by a friend's hands."

Blitzenberg was equally unselfish. "By no means," he said. "You are the fortunate one. Give me the revolver!"

Blitzenberg took the revolver. "Take care," exclaimed his friend. "It is loaded!"

"Never mind, I am used to fire-arms. Prepare, lucky fellow!"

"Look here," said Barsewisch. "On your honor, you'll follow?"

"On my honor!"

Blitzenberg raised the pistol.

"Stop a moment," cried Barsewisch. "I want to turn my back to you. I don't like to see you committing a crime." He had turned round, when a loud knock was heard.

Barsewisch gave a howl, and fell, crying, "I'm a dead man, I'm a dead man."

"Nonsense. It is only another letter."

"Are you sure?" asked the other, raising his head.

"Quite sure. Let me read it."

He broke the seal and read, "Good news. Your piece, 'A Crime from Good Nature,' is accepted."

"What do I see?" said Barsewisch, who had been looking over his friend's shoulder. "The letter is from Tina."

"Excuse me," replied Blitzenberg, "it is from Lena."

"Let me look at the signature."

"Why, it is Tina!"

"Nonsense. It is Lena!"

"The writing is not clear, but it is Tina's hand."

"The writing is my Lena's!"

They both seemed struck by the same bolt of lightning and looked solemnly at each other.

Then followed a long embrace. "*Partners still!*" sighed Barsewisch.



THE QUEEN'S PROTÉGÉ

BY MARY SUMMER

An interesting story, from the *Paris Illustré*, giving a series of effective pictures from the life of Marie Antoinette. Translated from the French, by A. L. W., for Short Stories—Copyrighted.

"No; I ask your Majesty's pardon, but that is not right at all. Gotte is a respectable girl, but a terrible flirt, who is trying to tease her lover. For that reason the gestures must be livelier, and there should be more pettishness shown when the soubrette throws down her embroidery. 'There, your ruffles can wait before I touch them again!' Remember, madame, that it is a defiance thrown to the valet Lafleur, who, by the way, takes it quite unconcernedly."

"Well, my dear Dazincourt, and how is it that you say nothing to me? Did I not get through my grand tirade very well?"

"Perfectly, monseigneur; I have nothing but praises to give you. Your highness carries a napkin over your shoulder as an ease that would make the valets of the Comédie-Française wild with envy."



"One would think that I had served at the tables of grand seigneurs all my life; is it not so, Antoinette?"

"toinette?"

"Do not ask me, my brother d'Artois, I am positively jealous. You get all the praise while for me there is nothing but scolding. Is it my fault that I am poor in my rôle? Elisabeth will tell you that I do not know it yet, and besides M. Campan discourages me."

From the depths of the orchestra, plunged in darkness, comes a big voice and a hearty laugh.

"Do not hunt for any more excuses, Antoinette. M. Dazincourt is right; you are too imposing, too majestic. If the rôle of queen is familiar to you, that of soubrette is somewhat of a novelty."

The actress thus spoken to leaned over the footlights.

"Do not be afraid, sire; I shall do better, I am sure. And while Elisabeth and Madam de Polignac are rehearsing their scene I will go and study my part in the garden."

The reader has perhaps understood that this is the theatre of the Trianon, where they are rehearsing the *Gageure Imprévue*, that pretty comedy of Sédaine's which has not grown old, and which we even yet listen to with pleasure. The actors on this occasion are Queen Marie Antoinette, Madame Elisabeth, the Comtesse Diane de Polignac, the Comte d'Artois and M. d'Adhémar. The public: the King of France, the only spectator admitted to these rehearsals. There is at this time in all France a rage for plays, and the Queen, too, has been seized with the contagion; so, at a short distance from the Little Trianon, she had built a pretty little box of a theatre lined with blue velvet. Lagrenée had painted the ceiling, and Dazincourt, from the Comédie-Française, was ordered by the first gentleman of the chamber to give his advice to the distinguished amateurs. They could not have made a better choice than this combination of actor and man of the world, who began life as secretary to the Maréchal de Richelieu and who was honored by the friendship of the Abbé de Vaiselon.

You should have seen the alert little provençal with his laughing face and sparkling eyes as he strode the stage of the little theatre, and filled with scrupulous conscientiousness the functions of stage manager and instructor.

Simple mortals often get headaches when they are annoyed, and the Queen of France had certainly the right to feel slightly vexed after so unsatisfactory a rehearsal. With heightened color, then, she went at a rapid pace across the corner of the garden, bordered with orange trees—the only concession made to Lenôtre's taste in the park of the Trianon. This time the daughter of Marie Thérèse did not wish to have it said, as one impertinent person had remarked after the representation of the "*Devin du Village*," that it was played as badly as only royalty can play. Book in hand she earnestly studied her part, and was so completely absorbed that she nearly fell into a fountain from which arose a corpulent Silenus. Decidedly, for the purposes of study, thought she, one would be better off in the English garden, since there was no chance of meeting anyone there. Leav-

ing on her left the hedges and statues, the queen crossed the little bridge thrown over the grotto, and passing on through the pavilion, where the Comtesse Dubarry had often come to drink coffee with Louis XV., she entered the Swiss valley so full of attractive surprises.

Marie Antoinette detested the straight walks of the Versailles park; and here nothing pleased her more than to fish in the pond, to see the cows milked, to run along the paths where chalets, temples, rivers, and prairies were clustered within a space of forty acres at most. Rousseau had made pastoral simplicity the fashion, and in laying out these English gardens people imagined they were closely approaching nature, while in reality nothing was ever more artificial.

While she walked the Queen continued to declaim her rôle: "My poor Lafleur, do not trouble yourself to reveal all the

Q-1

treasures of your mind; to madam you will never seem anything but a fool.' There, that time I caught the right intonation, and my severe professor himself—" She stopped astonished, for from a neighboring thicket a man suddenly arose. His head was bare, his cravat disordered, his clothes covered with dust, and as he gazed at her with haggard eyes his appearance was by on means reassuring. In spite of that it was not fright but annoyance that showed itself on Marie Antoinette's face.

Q

"What do you mean by walking here?" she asked in a haughty tone, quite different from that which Mdle. Gotte had just employed while teasing M. Lafleur.

"I am an unfortunate man who has no other resource than death if no one takes pity on him."

The dejected appearance of the man accorded so well with his words, that the Queen continued in a softer tone: "But did you not see the notice attached to the gates? 'By order of the Queen the public is forbidden to enter this enclosure.' How was it the Swiss guard let you come in?"

"I did not ask permission; a man who has lost his head does not trouble himself much about Swiss guards. Let the Queen send me to prison if I have disobeyed her orders.

They tell me, however, that she is good-hearted, and if I could only see her, who knows, perhaps I might find means to interest her. But there is no chance; one never sees the Queen but at a distance in royal robes of gold or silver and covered with precious stones."

"So, you are quite sure of that?"

"Yes indeed; just as sure as I am of seeing at this moment a charming little person in a white gown, a fichu of gauze and a big straw hat, which in my opinion hides altogether too much of her pretty hair. In fact you inspire me with confidence, and it will perhaps soothe me if I tell you my troubles."

"Just as you would like to confide them to the Queen, I suppose?"

"Exactly. Well, first you must know that I am a gentleman. I am called the Chevalier d'Orville—by the way, what is your name?"

An amusing idea suggested itself to the queen; "Mdlle. Gotte, at your service," she said with a courtesy.

"What a funny name. But come confess, Mdlle. Gotte, that you took me just now for a robber, or at least a vagabond. I am sure my neglected toilet would suggest it, but I have little heart now for such things. Though don't forget that, while I have no claim to ride in the king's coaches, I am of a good and even noble provincial family. Long before the reign of Francis I. my family was founded in Dauphiné, and we plume ourselves on being connected with Bayard, the chevalier 'without fear and without reproach.' But no matter for that; I am poor enough now to give points to Job, and not a soul in the world is interested in me. Formerly an officer in the king's army, a wound rendered me unfit for service, and for the last four years I have begged in vain for a modest place as collector of taxes. But those in authority only laugh at me, and at the moment when I thought I had accomplished my purpose a luckier rival, who had powerful protectors, succeeded instead of the poor provincial. The minister does me nothing but injustice."

"But, Chevalier, do not you know that ministers are created expressly for that purpose?"

"Hush you foolish girl; do you dare say such things in the Queen's garden? Just suppose you should be overheard! Well, I endure my poverty after a fashion. I continue to

vegetate, spending the night in copying music as M. Rousseau did, and ordinarily I would not complain; but this last misfortune is a little too much: I love and am loved by the prettiest little girl named Lucette. She has wonderful eyes, a figure and foot as small as that which I see within your rosetted slipper. Why do you blush, Mdle. Gotte? I have no intention of offending you."

"Well," said the haughty Antoinette, less offended in reality than d'Orville supposed, "you are not so unhappy after all, since you are beloved. What prevents you marrying Mdle. Lucette?"

"For the simple reason that she is no richer than I am, and her cruel mother pretends that she must marry a wealthy man. She would have been mine already, had I succeeded in getting that appointment; but I am worse off now than ever. They gave me hope that I might be appointed Receiver of Taxes at Grenoble, my native village; but as I came out from an interview with the Minister, a young clerk announced to me, with a malicious air, that the place had been already promised to a protégé of the Maréchal de Luxembourg. And just think how unfortunate I am. The worst of all is that this intriguing rival of mine is also courting Lucette! There was left but one last resource for me, and that was to try and see M. Campan, the Queen's librarian who was once a friend of our family. I rushed through the rue des Reservoirs to the Trianon. M. Campan was not at the chateau, they told me; he was walking in the park, where I would surely find him; but for an hour I have looked in vain, and I feel that all is lost. No doubt my rival will obtain Lucette's hand. Poor girl, she weeps in secret, but she does not dare to openly disobey her terrible mother. But I could not survive seeing her another's; and since both ambition and love fail me I shall leave a world where honest men win nothing but contumely and disappointment."

"Listen, M. d'Orville, one should never give up hope of the future and abandon himself to despair. Perhaps I also have some credit at the Court as well as M. Campan, and I shall struggle, if it is possible, against the influence of the Maréchal de Luxembourg. Since you have confided in me, give me your petition and your service papers."

"What! you will? ah, Mdle. Gotte, my protectress, my good angel, it is heaven itself that has brought about this

meeting, and just, too, when I was on the point of upbraiding Providence. Now I understand; you are attached to the person of the Queen; you see her, you speak to her every day; it is *she* I am sure whom you hope to interest in my fate." And as the pretended Gotte did not answer he continued: "Surely, my friend the chevalier, you are nothing but a fool; where are your wits? Don't you see the paper which she holds in her hand? Just now, too, I heard her declaiming as she walked. The thing is clear. The noble carriage of the head, this charming face can belong to no one but one of the stars of the Comédie-Française. Pardon me, mademoiselle, but I am a provincial who has never put foot in a theatre, and knows little more than the road from Grenoble to Versailles. How Lucette and I will bless you and pray for you until our dying day!" And the enthusiastic d'Orville threw himself on his knees, seized the pretty hand, which was covered with a silk mitten, and pressed upon it a fervent kiss.

Just at this moment one of the Trianon guards showed himself at the head of the walk and the Queen quickly withdrew her hand. "I beg you not to seek to learn my name," she said. "Leave for Dauphiné at once and you will soon have news from me."



Thereupon she ran off; her pretty figure vanished among the thickets, while the chevalier stood immovable, stunned and dazed by such unhopèd-for good luck.

The rehearsal was nearly ended and they were waiting for the queen to go over the scene which Dazincourt was not satisfied with. This time, however, everything went perfectly. A mischievous smile played on the beautiful red lips of the Austrian, and the prospect of making others happy brought brilliant lights into the large gray eyes of the august soubrette. "Bravo, Antoinette!" cried the single spectator from the orchestra, "that is natural and lively; well done indeed! Now we have an excellent Gotte, do you not agree with me, Dazincourt?"

"Ah, sire, I only wish I had more pupils who possessed such prompt intelligence as that of her Majesty."

The Queen joyfully clapped her hands.

"Sire, since you are satisfied, let me beg a favor. I have

something to ask of the Comptroller-General of your finances."

"The deuce! But no matter, provided it is not too large a sum—for you know, Antoinette, the treasury is none too rich at present."

"It has nothing whatever to do with money, sire, and the matter is less important than you suppose. Will your Majesty accompany me to the hamlet? And while we walk I will tell you a story."

A change of scene. No more artificial country; for once more nature has regained her rights. A lonely ravine, in the neighborhood of Grenoble, its steep sides dotted with pine-trees, while the river Isère rushes through with tempestuous waters amidst mossy stones and broken rocks. From the further bank of the river the mountain slopes down and the village of Voreppe shows itself in the distance, half revealing its scattered dwellings and smiling meadows. Standing on the bridge, thrown over the Isère, a man seems to be intently watching. It is the Chevalier d'Orville. Reaching home a week ago, he has since tried in vain to obtain a rendezvous with Lucette. But already dusk is veiling the rugged hillsides that mount toward the Grande-Chartreuse; one can no longer distinguish the road that branches from the King's highway, from Lyon to Grenoble, and loses itself in a deep gorge before it scales the height whereon stands the great Monastery.

And still Lucette does not come. Is she perhaps afraid to trust herself so late in this lonely spot? The chevalier is in despair and is about to turn back to the town when a shadow flits at a rapid pace across the wooden bridge. At last, it is she! And d'Orville advanced rapidly to greet his well-beloved.

"What has detained you so long?" he cried.

Quite out of breath, the young girl threw herself on the mossy bank.

"At one time," she said, "I feared that I could not come at all. My mother was suspicious and never lost sight of me for a moment. But the idea of causing you disappointment

gave me courage at last. Pretending a slight headache, I went up early to my room. There I awaited the coming of night, and by the aid of a rope from the window and the key of the garden door, which I had taken, I managed to escape."

"How can I thank you sufficiently, my darling? Nothing was wanting but your beloved presence to give me back hope. I can't describe to you what the separation has cost me. So, for pity's sake, let me kiss you once more."

"But would it be right, now that all is changed? You must know that to-day your rival appeared at our house in a triumphant mood. He declared that he had obtained the place, which meant so much to us, and that his commission will arrive to-morrow. My mother has authorized him to pay his addresses to me and nothing remains but to fix the day of the marriage. Alas! how can I, a feeble creature, resist the whole family thus arrayed against me? If I am here alone to-night it is only that I must warn you of our coming misfortune. Be strong, be courageous, my dear d'Orville. Say to yourself that though they may constrain Lucette to this marriage, they can never take away her heart; that is yours beyond recall."

"Very well," said d'Orville, angrily, "be as resigned as you please since it seems to come so easy for you; but for my part I cannot endure life without you. I know what is left for me to do!"

"For pity's sake do not look at me with such angry eyes; do not speak to me in such a tone. What have I done to merit such severity?"

"Oh! pardon me, Lucette. My sorrow makes me unjust. I am wicked to torment you so; but if you only knew! I suffer all the more since for an instant I had a dream of happiness and a ray of hope crossed my sad horizon. It is only a few days ago that in the park of the Trianon I met an unknown lady to whom I related my trouble, and she of her own accord offered me her protection. She was so noble and so charming, she appeared so sincere that I readily trusted to her promises; but, alas, I see now that she has forgotten me."

"How do you know that she is not still thinking of you? Wait a little before you abandon all hope, and above all, my dear d'Orville, promise me that you will make no attempt on your life."

He did not answer, and she rested her trembling hand on his shoulder, caressing him with her look and murmuring such words as mothers use to soothe their children. Under the magnetic charm of her beloved voice and touch d'Orville felt, little by little, the keenness of his sorrow abate. After all, how delightful it was to roam thus hand in hand in the soft light of the rising moon.

At the gates of Grenoble they were forced at last to separate, and in spite of Lucette's prayers d'Orville passed the greater part of the night in writing letters and putting his papers in order as if he were preparing to leave this world. Toward morning, harassed with fatigue and exhausted with emotion, he threw himself on the bed and slept heavily until the door was noisily opened.

"Quick, M. le Chevalier, open your eyes. Here is a letter and a package they have brought for you." And the worthy widow, proprietor of the hotel where d'Orville stayed, held out a large envelope bearing the royal seal, and a box which seemed to contain jewels. Still half asleep, the chevalier nonchalantly broke the great red seal. After reading the enclosure d'Orville grew as pale as if he were about to faint, for the letter enclosed his commission as Receiver of Taxes at Grenoble and the box a pair of beautiful diamond earrings that came from Boehmer, the queen's jeweler. A paper folded within the box contained these words: "For Mademoiselle Lucette from Mademoiselle Gotte."

Without thinking of his attire or his hostess, who fled dismayed, d'Orville sprang out of bed, and ten minutes after was at his loved-one's door, making a terrible racket. In a wrapper and night-cap Lucette's mother presently put her nose out of the window.

"Madame," cried the breathless chevalier, "I come to ask you for Mdlle. Lucette's hand."

"What, again! You have the impudence to show yourself here again, when I forbade you to come near the house? Go on your way. My daughter is not intended for starvelings of your kind."

"But, madame, I am no longer a starveling; I have obtained the place of Receiver of Taxes, which you yourself made the condition of our marriage."

"You are an impostor, sir. You are too late. We saw

only yesterday the real Receiver of Taxes, and it is he that shall marry Lucette."

"Confound it! This is a little too much, madame! Open the door, just for a minute and I can prove the truth of what I say, for I have the commission in my pocket at this moment."

Lucette, who had overheard this colloquy, quietly opened the door and explanations were soon and satisfactorily made. The ambitious mother no longer had reason to oppose her daughter's happiness.

"It is all very well, chevalier," said Lucette, while she tried on her beautiful ear-rings, which her intended had brought with him, "there is something still wanting to my happiness, and that is, not to be able to thank our generous benefactress, or even to know to whom to offer our thanks. Is it not too bad?"

"Don't distress yourself about that, my dear girl. As soon as we are married we will go to Paris, and I shall find means to discover Mdlle. Gotte, either at Versailles or the Trianon."

But the trip, postponed from day to day for various reasons, was not carried out. The cares of the household soon absorbed Lucette, and the chevalier was too fond of his wife to leave her for any length of time. The years rolled by, and the happy couple lived peaceably at Grenoble without perceiving the flight of time or the great changes that were taking place in the nation. In fact, they were approaching the last days of 1793; the King of France was dead on the scaffold, and the Queen, Marie Antoinette, was awaiting her fate in the prison of the Temple.

One evening the Chevalier d'Orville entered his home much excited.

"Here is grand news, Lucette," he said; "a relation of my mother's has just died and left me all his property. I must positively go to Paris to see about the inheritance, and now that our children are old enough to be left behind, you must not refuse to go with me. I know that the capital is not very gay just now, but we will not stay longer than is necessary to arrange this business."

On the morrow Lucette and her husband mounted the heavy coach that took three days and nights to reach the rue du Bouloi. In spite of the sadness that reigned through-

out the capital, Madame d'Orville found much to admire, since it was her first visit to the great city. The busy throng on the boulevards; the Palais Royal with its shops of all kinds, the great promenade through the park of the Tuileries where were to be seen the astounding toilettes of the "divinities" of that day. Besides, she did not lose hope of meeting their protectress, and when she saw a beautiful woman of noble appearance, she turned a questioning glance on her husband, and d'Orville answered by a negative gesture. She had done this for the twentieth time when he said: "You must remember, Lucette, that it is useless to ask me this. Mdlle. Gotte must have been a friend of the queen and a fervent royalist, and I hope sincerely that she is now far from Paris. For my own part, I do not feel at ease here. It is true I see displayed at all the corners of the streets "Liberty and Fraternity," but in spite of that it seems to me that I am surrounded by a pack of ravening wolves. Happily I have finished my business with the notary, and if you are ready we will leave to-morrow for Dauphiné. To-day, since there is nothing better to do, I will take you to dine at Méot's, the famous restaurant of the rue Saint-Honoré. Let us hurry or we may meet the dreary procession which is to pass about four o'clock on the way to the guillotine, and I am anxious, if possible, to spare you the dismal sight."

But already both sides of the street were so crowded that they made their way with much difficulty. Never had such a crowd massed itself in and about the rue Saint-Honoré. They arrived at last at Méot's restaurant, where every window and doorway was packed with a crowd of curious sight-seers. Ragged and hideous wretches elbowed deputies of the Convention; and presidents of the Jacobin clubs, members of the Revolutionary Committee, and in fact representatives of all Paris were there.

But even as they reached the spot the jolting of the approaching cart could be heard, and presently the gendarmes who preceded it appeared.

"Too late!" sorrowfully cried the chevalier. "In spite of all we must see this horrible sight. But above all, Lucette, do not faint or they may take you for a 'suspect.'"

The crowd was hushed as though at last appalled at what was doing with their sanction, and only the horrible cries and

oaths of the bloodthirsty hirelings of the Revolutionary Committee were to be heard.

The cart advanced slowly, and instead of the usual hecatomb of victims, one saw only a single woman seated on the bench where the condemned were usually placed. Her black garments and white hair showed afar off underneath this pale Autumn sky.

Fascinated in spite of themselves, d'Orville and his wife made their way little by little through the crowd, and the dismal vehicle came so near the two that it almost brushed against them in passing. A cry, stifled by the noise of the streets, escaped from the chevalier.

She was there before him in that loathsome cart, she, the beautiful girl of the Trianon!

With her hands clasped and resting on her knees, lost to her surroundings and insensible to further outrage, Marie Antoniette seemed no longer of the earth. The long braids of golden hair, the dazzling eyes, the red lips, the lustre and beauty of these sorrow had dimmed and almost effaced. Only the majestic carriage of the head remained—alas, how soon the guillotine would change that too. D'Orville, stifling with emotion, pressed Lucette's arm: "Look, there she is!"

Then turning their backs on the ~~crowd which~~
moved on like a great flood toward
place of execution, he drew his companion
away.

They entered the Hotel Warwick, rue de la Loi, where they had taken lodgings; and while the head of the Queen of France rolled on the scaffold, d'Orville and Lucette invoked divine compassion for the unhappy woman who had made them so happy, and who, herself, had been doomed to suffer such misfortune, such tortures of mind and body.

ETCHING: "ACCORDIN' T' SENT JEEMS"

BY MRS. C. C. SCOTT

Selected as the winner of the prize for the best humorous etching in competition 9. Written for Short Stories—Copyrighted.

The colored preacher was a hoary-headed Hercules, black as ebony and strong as a lion. He announced his text as coming from the Epistle of St. James in the following words:

"De moon she riz; den de stars dey riz, h' it wos in de night time; den de moon she sot an' de stars in the fumermun dey sot. Samson seed an' seed not; he hyerd an' hyerd not cos he's weekit an' ongodly.

"Dis is 'cordin' to de gawspil ob Sent Jeems, de 'posle'."

There was a rustle and stir among the worshipers, and turkey-tail fans moved rapidly back and forth in a mild excitement of expectancy.

Slowly raising the large Bible above his head the preacher brought it down upon the pulpit with a resounding bang.

"An behole an' lo!" he cried, "Samson rassle wid de lion an' fling 'im. Samson make de fox an' de wile cat stan' plum still whilst he ties de fiah-crackers on dey tails. Moreober de ring-dove she moan an' de dawg he bay de moon. Bress de Lawd! Berrily I 'zorts unto yer, Samson split open de lion's jaw-bone wid er toof-picker an' he was a ongodly sinner. He sot in de cheer ob de skawnfulles' sinner in dat qua'tter.

"One day Samson fin' er bee-tree down by de lake, an' nigh de fode he seed er gre't, big, large lion er prancin' an' er caperin'. Whatcher reckon he do?"

The expectant congregation held its breath. After a moment's silence a weazen-faced man exclaimed:

"He runned!"

A vigorous shake of the orator's massive head was the only response.

"He cussed!" a "sister" declared from the front row.

"He fit!" a fat, black brother guessed timidly.

"No!" thundered the preacher. "Samson jes cotch dat lion by de back ob de naik an' slap his jaws an' perlitely pull

his nose. Wid de he'p ob de g-o-o-d L-a-w-d Samson helt up dat lion an' *skat* at 'im, an' *shame* 'im, an' *skawn* 'im!

"Den dis ongawdly sinner takes hisse'f t' a cirkis. He look 'pon de lemonaig when h'it wos red, an' he gits mad 'cos nobody gib him howdy an' say unto him, 'br'er Samson, hab a dlass er lemonaig.'

"Den Samson mosey 'long inter de show an' soon's he seed de *narcissarus* he picks dat *narcissarus* up jes as e-a-s-y an' fling 'im up an' down so e-a-s-y! Den he spy de elafont an' he picks *him* up an' fling 'im crost his shoulder, an' dance de tip-toe-lady backstep cl'ar inter de ring. He dar' fo' fling down de elafont, an' whirl in an' up an' fling a big white hawse on one shoul'er an' a big black hawse on t'other shoul'er, an' den ole Samson prance an' caper an' dance de dubble-shuffle an' de hen-waller backstep. De white hawse he whinker an' de black hawse he snort, but 'taint no use er whinkerin' ner yit er snortin', fer berrily I say onto yer, Samson git madder an' madderer, an' fling dat big white hawse inter a tater patch five mile crost de ribber, an' knock down a gin house ten mile erway wid de big black hawse, he fling 'im so all-fired swif' an' hard—glory t' the Lawd.

"Is dere a ongodly Samson in dis skongration? Ef so berrily I say onto yer, better 'ginter pray fo' de debble cotch yer.

"Samson's er fryin' on de coals dis minit, an' dar's whar you'l be de day an' de hour yer know nuffin' bout. Praise de Lawd!"



DISAPPEARED

BY FREDERICK R. BURTON

The story of a strange man and his stranger fancies. Written for Short Stories—Copyrighted.

“Who looks on black, I tell you, stares death in the face!”

Alexander Trask swung about in his chair and peered gloomily out into the street. All the entertaining bustle of the thoroughfare, the constantly varying scene, the background of lofty buildings, and trees in the park, the hundred and one diverse types of man momentarily appearing—these were as nothing. His eyes lingered as with longing upon the blinding sphere of electric light suspended above the sidewalk. His companions exchanged significant glances and puffed blue wreaths into the smoky clouds that overhung them. It was only after a considerable pause that O'Meara knocked the ashes from his cigar.

“I should think, Aleck you'd be afraid to go home after dark, eh?”

“Bartley!” exclaimed Trask, swinging about again and facing his friend, “you don't know what you are talking about! You haven't the remotest idea! If you had the faintest realization of the infinite significance of the words you use, you would turn as pale as this table-cloth and think twice before you spoke. And as for you, Frank,” and he turned to Tillinghast, “you, with all your skill in the use of pigments, with all your researches into the nature of color, its varieties, the æsthetics of their combination, you yet do not approach to an understanding of the elements of the matter. You must not get the notion of using bitumen in your work. It is suggestive of death. Leave death and black to the scientist, and devote yourself in your art to portraying the hopeful, the vivid, in its literal sense the living, by the use of colors that not alone symbolize hope and life, but are essentially life.”

Neither Francis Tillinghast, nor his warm friend Bartley O'Meara, took any offence at the vehemence of Trask's utterances. The lawyer sipped the last drops from his coffee

cup, watching Trask calmly, and Tillinghast took his cigar from his mouth to say, with the utmost self-possession:

"It is vain to dogmatize to an artist, Aleck; you know that the whole world may be right and the one painter wrong; he cannot be right with regard to his own genius and destiny unless he pursues his chosen course unflinchingly."

"And as for fearing the night!" continued Trask, as if unconscious of the break in his discourse, "you talk as if night comprehended black. The darkness of night is merely a question of shading. You have noticed in the brightest noonday that if the sunlight is interrupted by an intervening building before it reaches the ground, there is a dark spot to mark the interruption. That dark spot, which we call a shadow, contains all the essence of night. The sun sets and a general shadow creeps over the land; it becomes darker, and if the sky happens to be overcast with clouds we find it difficult to see. And yet night was never so dark that you could not distinguish grades of darkness, lighter or heavier as you looked up, or toward, a building or forest. There is no black in the darkness of night; black is absolute, it is more than color; it is—"

Trask turned his face again to the street and became silent. O'Meara was quick to take advantage of the cue in Trask's unfinished sentence, but without exposing his eagerness, he said quietly:

"Go ahead, Aleck, if you've any original ideas on color, or blackness, or what not, let us have them in coherent form so that we can understand them and you. Otherwise, we may think you are preparing material for a new humorous poem, or a satire."

"Yes, yes, of course," responded Trask; "are all your thoughts codified and bound in vellum? Does Tillinghast hold the palette of his conversation in one hand and with the other dab spots of wisdom on the ephemeral canvas of half listening ears? Must I, because I chance to earn the price of this dinner by grinding out typical American humor, have no serious thought? Come, am I the clown to you?"

"No, no, Trask; far from it, either in your conversation or your writings; but some of your incompletely expressed ideas deserve more consideration. Let's have them."

Trask's face was overspread with a look of the most gloomy despondency. Although he had been morose previous to

this instant, he was now so utterly wretched that both his friends glanced at each other startled momentarily from their studied reserve.

"Boys," said Trask in a low tone, strikingly in contrast with his excited speech of a few seconds before, "I certainly owe you an apology. I suppose my talk is all Greek to you. for you cannot even suspect the essence of truth at the bottom of my incompletely expressed ideas, as you call them. You have asked me why I am not publishing as much matter as formerly; why I have not met you at dinner as often as in times past; why I have become sombre, and all that sort of thing. There is a reason, a terrible reason—I hardly dare think of it, and yet cannot drive it from my mind. I will try to tell it to you—but it must be in the strictest confidence, for I would not for my life have any hint get abroad of what I have been at and what I have discovered."

The lawyer breathing forth clouds of smoke denser than ever, said, reassuringly:

"You may depend upon us, Aleck."

Trask hesitated perceptibly as he began: "I will not say now what it was that led me to take up the studies that have resulted in the discoveries I have referred to. It is enough that I tell you that more than a year has passed since I began direct investigation along the lines of a scientific theory not my own, but a famous hypothesis of a last century savant. I cannot state the results of my discoveries in one word, so I will begin with the simplest. I find that black is not as it is commonly defined, an absence of color, or light; a nearer approach to true definition would be an absorption of all color and light, inasmuch as black is the cumulation of decay in color, which is merely the physical manifestation of light. But, furthermore, black is not that passive thing which is defined as a wanting, a destitution of something; it is a prime essence, a vital being, and light, on the contrary, is mere activity. Am I clear?"

"You mean to say," asked the artist, who was impatient to interrupt, "that blackness is the active manifestation of some body that corresponds to a lamp, or the sun in giving out light? That this body gives out blackness?"

"Who said anything about blackness?" exclaimed Trask, irritated. "I have been talking about black, not blackness. The one is a positive term; the other a weak, indefinite, relative

term. There is blackness in a cloudy night, when you cannot see your hand before your face; call blackness darkness, and the phraseology will be much nearer; for when you come to black, *black*, I say you have before you a positive element of the universe, a force apparent to us; and the working of that force is death."

Trask paused again, and O'Meara put his foot hard down on Tillinghast's toes, but not in time to prevent the artist from saying:

"I don't see how you come to hold such a theory, or what it leads to. Color, as every schoolboy knows—"

Trask smiled bitterly again and leaning back responded: "Every schoolboy knows nothing about it, and neither do you. There is no theory here; it is fact. Now will you admit what I state in regard to the simplest thing I have found, or will you dispute like an ignoramus?"

"Go on, Aleck," said O'Meara, "we accept your statement; let us see what it leads to?"

"All right," began Trask suppressing his excitement. "I'll tell you, not show you; I can't do that here. You admit that black is a positive thing, that it exists by virtue of its own force. Having admitted that, you infer, of course, that I have discovered this—thing—this entity—this black—and you are now waiting to know how it acts on matter. To understand that you must know that matter, all matter—"

He paused again, and the blood rushed into his pallid face and glowed even to the roots of his hair. He turned restlessly towards the street and with knitted brows looked at and beyond the glinting foliage, looked at the flashing windows of the street cars, and his eyes rested soon with an instinctive, irresistible attraction on the blinding globe of white light above the sidewalk. At last he rose abruptly, struck the table with his fist until the glasses rattled and danced, and exclaimed emphatically:

"No, not that; I'll be cursed before I tell you that," and he seized his hat and strode out of the dining-room.

Tillinghast and O'Meara turned gravely toward each other.

"He is certainly insane," said the artist, sadly.

"I am afraid so," returned the lawyer; "all his talk this evening had the character of madness, incoherent, visionary, full of strange terms; but he might have given us a complete

clew to his trouble had you not interrupted him. I am afraid you are not good as an investigator."

"Perhaps not, Bartley," assented Tillinghast, "but he made me so impatient with his nonsense—"

"That you forgot our determination to be patient in order that we might draw him out. Too bad, but perhaps we may do better another time. You see, like many insane men, he has become terribly suspicious—and how irritable! Poor Aleck! he is totally unlike himself. From the ideal good fellow, witty, careless, even-tempered and generous, he has become well nigh unrecognizable in a host of traits that would be unendurable had we not known him in other days."

"Ah!" said Tillinghast with a shudder, "it makes me feel dreadfully blue. He is evidently a hopeless wreck."

"Well, I don't know. It struck me that there was a good deal of method in some of his talk. Certainly, we must not give him up. If he is on the verge of insanity we must help him. He has no warmer friends anywhere."

The rumble of the street, and the bustle of a dinner party breaking up, and the running of waiters, were not heard by the lawyer and artist in the pause that ensued in their talk. A dismal silence filled their minds. When it was broken it was the artist who said:

"I will go to his room to-morrow and try to regain his confidence, and perhaps he will tell me the whole story. I will apologize for my impatience, you know, and appeal to our long-standing friendship. I believe I can succeed, and, to tell the truth, I have a sneaking curiosity to know more about his wild theories."

O'Meara smiled. "Don't let him see it," he cautioned, "and don't oppose him. Remember, he is probably insane; you have every reason to be patient and do nothing that may aggravate his disorder. Finally, if you fail, I will myself try him, though I don't know how he will take a call at his rooms. It is months since he asked us not to go there."

"I think we can manage that part of it," said Tillinghast, and the friends rose and separated for the night.

The next day Tillinghast and Trask did not appear at the usual rendezvous for dinner. Neither absence surprised Lawyer O'Meara, for Trask had been irregular for a long time, and as for the artist, well, it was not to be expected that increasing cares would permit the uninterrupted contin-

uance of youthful pleasures. And it was one of the necessities of bohemian bachelor existence, too, that the rough side should be uppermost at times. There was an element of good in it; the next meeting would be the pleasanter.

It was with this dreary style of argument that Bartley O'Meara tried to make his solitary dinner pass agreeably.

The morrow came, and when it was evening O'Meara hastened to the familiar dining-room. Tillinghast was not there. Trask he did not look for. The lawyer acknowledged that his friend's absence worried him, and yet, when Tillinghast had spent a month sketching in the Catskills, he had felt decently comfortable dining alone. Overwork was certainly telling on him—and he would take pains to call at Frank's studio the very next day.

The unexpected calling of one of his cases for trial detained him down town until night again, and when to his increased discomfort Tillinghast did not appear at dinner, he did not stop to eat but hurried on uptown to his friend's studio. Arrived at the building, he went at once to the elevator boy.

"Is Mr. Tillinghast in?"

"No, sir; I don't remember seein' Mr. Tillin'hast for two or t'ree days, sir."

O'Meara hunted up the janitor.

"Hasn't Tillinghast been here for the past three days?"

"Well, sir, I'm not sure. I remember him going out day before yesterday morning and saying something to me about a picture as was to be called for. That's how I remember it. It was called for and taken away that afternoon; a man called for it in a landau with two white horses, and his man went up to the studio—"

"Yes, yes; but Tillinghast?"

"Well," added the janitor hastily, "I hain't seed him since; but I hadn't thought nothing of it. He may have been home."

"Is there any way you can find out whether he has been here?"

The janitor scratched his head. "Yes," he said slowly; "there is. A letter come for him not an hour after he went out, and as I was putting the room to rights I left it on the table where he would be sure to get it. Would you like to look in, sir?"

They went up in the elevator together and the janitor un-

locked the artist's studio. A lot of papers and letters that had been dropped through a slit were pushed back when the door was opened. On the table in the middle of the main room was the letter the janitor had put there two days and more before.

"He has not been here," said the janitor; "I hope there's nothing wrong, is there?"

"Has anybody been to see him?"

"Oh, yes; several. There was the man who came to take the picture and that man who used to come with you, Trask, I think his name is, has been here twice, and there's been others, too."

Lawyer O'Meara left the studio building feeling unnerved. He wandered down to Broadway and stood at the corner debating with himself what he ought to do. Warned by the loud notes of a gong, drivers turned their carriages to the curbstone, and a fire-engine went rattling, smoking by. It was followed by the usual crowd of men and boys on the run. O'Meara watched them with an absent interest, and when the street had become quiet again he was aroused from his thoughts by a familiar voice saying: "Why? halloo, Bartley, how are you?" and he looked up and recognized Alexander Trask. Before he could reply, Trask went on:

"Have you seen Tillinghast? I went down to the Café Noir, and not seeing either of you there thought I would go up to the studio and get Frank before I dined. I haven't seen him since the day before yesterday."

"And I haven't seen him," said O'Meara, "since the night we dined together and you left us so abruptly."

"Why, I have," exclaimed Trask, in surprise. "He came over to my den the very next morning and we had a pleasant hour or two together. The poor fellow seemed to think he had offended me, when as a matter of fact it was I who owed an apology. He seemed so cut up about it that I made a special call on him yesterday, but he was not in."

"He hasn't been to his rooms since he went to call on you."

"Why, you don't say so! Where do you suppose he's gone?"

"God knows! I am thinking of notifying the police."

"Dear me! I don't know but we'd better. Have you been to the Artist's Club?"

"No."

"Well, we'd better get some dinner and go around there together. He's probably been there or left some word."

O'Meara was cast down during dinner and anxious about Tillinghast; but he was fully alive, nevertheless, to a great change in Trask. The gloom had gone, and in its place the comfortable, contented bohemian nature had returned. He talked lightly of one thing and another, made no reference to the artist, and in no way betrayed any of the peculiarities of speech that had distinguished him for months past. When the dinner was over they lit their cigars and set out for the Artist's Club.

No one at the club remembered seeing Tillinghast for several days, and after a serious consultation with several of the members, the lawyer and Trask went to the nearest police precinct house to report the matter. Both were keenly examined by the sergeant in charge. O'Meara could give little information beyond a clear, concise description of the man and his ways. Trask said that the artist had called on him about eleven o'clock; that they had discussed several scientific theories together, that in the progress of the discussion, Tillinghast had shown no signs of mental aberration, had propounded no unusual views, and had given no hint as to his plans for the immediate future.

"I should say," said Trask, contracting his brows and speaking very slowly, "that he left my room about one o'clock, and my impression was that he was going to the club for lunch."

The sergeant saw that the case was a serious one, and he caused a general alarm to be given to all the police stations in the city to look for "Francis Tillinghast, artist, 5 feet 7, 142 pounds, blue eyes, light hair, full sandy beard and moustache; when last seen had on blue sack coat and trousers, turn-down collar, and wide wine-colored scarf."

On the third day of the search Bartley O'Meara was sitting at his desk sadly thinking of his friend, when the door opened and a police inspector and a detective came in. The lawyer rose eagerly.

"Any news?" he asked.

"No, Mr. O'Meara, no news exactly," replied the inspector soberly, "but a clue, perhaps. Will you sit down?"

The lawyer complied with a feeling that something of the utmost importance was coming. The inspector sat in front of him, but the detective quietly took a position from which he could watch the lawyer's face.

"You are a lawyer, sir," began the inspector, "and accustomed to grave matters of this nature so I shall not beat about the bush with you as I might were the facts other than they are. You will see without any argument or warning the prime necessity of answering my questions unreservedly."

Mr. O'Meara bowed.

"Very well," continued the inspector, "we suspect foul play."

He paused, but O'Meara looked steadfastly at him without a word.

"Now then," said the inspector, "do you know anything whatever that would lead you to suspect Alexander Trask of a desire to do away with Mr. Tillinghast?"

O'Meara's answer was prompt and emphatic: "Nothing whatever;" but in the few seconds that ensued between the mention of Trask's name and the end of the inspector's question a multitude of suggestions arose in the lawyer's mind. He recalled the way in which Trask had shown his irritability towards the artist. He saw that if a detective knew of the circumstance, a plausible theory of a quarrel would be deduced, and the end might be the arrest and trial of Trask for murder. In a flash he weighed the question and decided that it were far better that Tillinghast's disappearance should go unexplained into history as one of the mysteries of the criminal record, than that his life-long friend Trask should by any act of his endure the chances of law in a murder trial.

"We were all in the habit," he said, "of speaking with the utmost frankness together, and I never knew of any discussion that could be called a quarrel that arose between us."

"Mr. Trask has not quite been himself for some months, has he?" inquired the detective, suddenly.

"We thought he was in some trouble," assented the lawyer undisturbed, "and we did what we could to make him comfortable; but I do not believe there is a ghost of a chance that he is responsible for Tillinghast's disappearance."

For some time after that interview O'Meara was in a state of constant apprehension lest Trask should be arrested. The newspapers gave reports of investigations, and every day

brought reporters to O'Meara's office in quest of points. Every day the lawyer was summoned to the morgue to inspect bodies yielded up by the river and the bay, and every mail brought dismal photographs from distant morgues, but in no picture or remains did he discern the likeness of his friend.

He had twice talked with Trask about the call Tillinghast had made on him, and Trask had said:

"Why, we went into my unique theories about color, and though he did not accept them he was interested and in no way displeased. I was irritable the night before, had been drinking too much I suppose, and so gave undue importance to my notions. They are not on my mind now, and I have taken to humorous writing again."

And the upshot of all his investigations was that Bartley O'Meara could not entertain for an instant any suspicion against his friend.

The relations between O'Meara and Trask were even more intimate after the disappearance than they had ever been before. O'Meara noticed it and felt that it was a good thing for both. He could see that his own presence was helpful to Trask, who always brightened when they came together, and for himself, he felt more attached to his friend by the common feeling of loss.

It was about a month after the time that Tillinghast had disappeared. A good many things had gone wrong with O'Meara. He had lost a case through the carelessness of an associate counsel; a disastrous failure had swept away the greater part of his accumulations; his father's health had failed, and new and heavy burdens were in consequence laid upon him: and if there were an affair of the affections, transcending his love for his artist friend, a disappointment more keen than any he had ever known, it was a matter that he kept sacredly to himself, and not even Aleck Trask suspected its existence. With new zeal he applied himself to his practice, and his legal friends declared among themselves that the good-natured Irishman was getting ambitious. Nevertheless, he left his office now and then, and walked out sombrely into the streets, and traversed block after block oblivious to the hurrying crowd, oblivious above all to a haggard figure that shadowed him from corner to corner, and peered after him with longing eyes.

It was on such a jaunt as this that O'Meara, his mind racked with many doubts and anxieties, came to the door of a church thrust in between great granite buildings where commerce and trade had their swarms of devotees. He paused abruptly and looked up at the graven figure over the door, made the sign of the cross and went in. He had but to pass the inner doors to shut himself completely out from the distress and confusion of the business world. The dim nave was empty. One or two worshipers sat with bowed heads in widely separated pews. The whole atmosphere of the place was pregnant with peace. He walked slowly half way down the aisle, bent his knee at a pew door, entered it and knelt upon the hard bench back of the rail. For several minutes he looked up at the groined arches, at the shrines and altars. Then he bowed his head upon his hands and the burden of his cares dropped from him.

How long he knelt thus he did not know, but at last with a sudden resolution he rose to his feet, bent his knee again at the pew door and turned down the aisle. His attention was instantly caught by a man whom he recognized with a chill of surprise, who rose hastily from a neighboring pew and hurried towards the door of the church. What was Alexander Trask, notoriously a scoffer, doing in the church? Bartley O'Meara's judicial mind was quickly made up. What he did might have been done by another man on impulse. With the lawyer his action was the result of a train of reasoning conducted from beginning to end with electric rapidity. Trask had no more than emerged from the pew in his flight when lawyer O'Meara set out down the aisle after him on the dead run. Trask, pale with terror, hastened his pace, but O'Meara overtook him just outside the doors upon the steps. The fugitive turned and made a desperate attempt to disarm his pursuer with a smile and careless chaff, but the lawyer caught him by both wrists and exclaimed :

“By God, Trask, you know what became of Frank Tillinghast?”

Trask did not faint nor fall down; he trembled a little as the blood rushed into his face and flushed the roots of his hair, and on his compressed lips came the old, bitter smile which had appeared when he tried to tell his friends of his discoveries. The pause of a second ensued which seemed minutes long to O'Meara as he held his friend captive, and

then tears rolled down from Trask's eyes, and he said in a low voice :

"Bartley, you are a good man. I am as safe in your hands as if I trusted the powers that you have been worshiping."

The lawyer's heart seemed about to burst as he dropped Trask's wrists and covered his face with his hands. The few worshipers in the church, disturbed by the flight and pursuit, came out, and stood looking curiously on. Trask put his arm through that of the lawyer and said in a kindly, steady voice :

"Come Bartley, let us not make a scene here. The church is nothing to me, but to you it is much. Come, we will go where nothing can be profaned, to my room, and talk our trouble over like friends. Don't shudder, Bartley, or try to draw away from me; you are a good man and my friend, and you will go away from my room more my friend than ever before. Come! Why, Bartley, since Frank disappeared there has hardly been an hour when I haven't seen you. I have followed you about like a ghost, for I feared everything. My mind narrowly escaped becoming unbalanced, and I had to keep near you to preserve myself. But it is all clear now, and perhaps it would have been better if I had told you about this before. For I am no murderer, Bartley, as people generally understand the term. I saw Frank Tillinghast die, it is true, but it was a self-inflicted death. Come, we won't say anything more until we get where the walls have had their ears stopped with excelsior."

During this strange speech Trask had been leading O'Meara away from the church, and by this time the lawyer had ceased to make any resistance. The two had changed places to a degree. O'Meara was hot and feverishly excited. He wanted to run up the stairways to the elevated railroad; he was sick with impatience and fear. Trask, who should have been the anxious man, was singularly quiet, self-possessed and reasonable. When they had reached his room he made O'Meara sit down, while he stood and proceeded to say in a grave, moderate manner :

"It was in this room, Bartley, that Frank Tillinghast met death. Despite my warning, he threw my hard-won knowledge to the wind and looked on black. Death came at once, before Frank had time to acknowledge that he was convinced."

Across the room from O'Meara something stood concealed from view by a sheet. Trask stepped to it and pulled the sheet away. There stood revealed a piece of mechanism that bore a rough resemblance to a photographer's camera. The walls, however, were of differently colored glass, and were not arranged in the ordinary cubical form, but more like a cubical dodecahedron. Trask tapped the nozzle of the camera with his forefinger, and said :

"In there, Bartley, is the element black, the great destructive force of the universe, and whoso looks in upon it meets inevitable death. Frank heard me say this and disbelieved. He looked, and the proof came in his immediate disappearance."

"In the name of all that is true, Trask," exclaimed O'Meara, starting up, "what do you mean?"

Trask drew the sheet once more over the mechanism and said : "Sit down again, Bartley ; sit down, and let me tell you. A long time ago, my friend, I came to look upon matter as not what it seems to be to the ordinary observer. I noticed that a stick of wood consumed in the flames disappeared, but that in disappearing it resolved itself into various forces, none of which was lost. I saw a powerful acid act upon a piece of metal, and the matter disappeared, resolving itself into certain forces. Could it be possible to break the balance of forces which is represented in the various forms of animal life? Would not the result be instantaneous disappearance? Would not matter appear for what it really is—nothing but a figment of the imagination, a name for what exists simply as the aggregation of forces held in balance? I saw that the vital force was what we call light. Think! nothing exists where light is not! Light and life are common. My first thought then was—darkness contains the destructive, the unbalancing element. I had grasped the idea, but erred for the moment in the application. I will not tell you now by what steps I arrived at the final conclusion that the absolutely black must be the death element. I searched for it in nature and of course failed to find it. But out of light itself I constructed it. The gas or vapor known as light solidified becomes black. When I had first succeeded in reducing the vapor light to a tangible substance I applied the liquid form to vegetable matter, and to my delight it instantly disappeared. Then the problem was how to reach animal life. I

soon reasoned that the vulnerable point must be the eye, through which light and life quicken the mass of balanced forces known as the body. I then had to construct the medium under the cloth there by which black is set in active play, that is, made receptive; for no ray issues from black. The eye once brought in the presence of this great element the light of the body is absorbed, its forces simultaneously are dissolved, and in their freedom the mass disappears."

"And you mean to say," gasped O'Meara.

"That poor Tillinghast met his instantaneous dissolution in this room. Don't be shocked! You do not breathe his body in the air. The forces which in a certain balance you once recognized as Frank Tillinghast, have long since scattered themselves to the four corners of the earth, and inhere now perhaps in a thousand different balances of as many different characters."

"But how——" began O'Meara again.

"Why, Frank would not credit me, deliberately went to the machine and dared me to set the black at work. We were both excited; I should have left him in ignorance, but my pride was wounded by his ridicule and unbelief, and I permitted the test; one instant after his eye had encountered the fatal ray, he had vanished. A heap of clothes lay on the floor. My first feeling was one of resentful satisfaction. I cared not that I had lost my friend; I had not thought of consequences, I only saw my theories justified, science revealed, truth glorified! Ah! it was a triumph—I feel again that supreme excitement with which I shouted even as the balanced forces were trembling on the verge of dissolution; even as the outlines of his form began to grow indistinct, in that brief instant, Bartley, when he was hopelessly lost and yet conscious, I shouted 'Now, do you know?' And one second later I stepped upon a heap of clothes, and uplifting both hands, exclaimed, 'Black, thou art mighty! thou art mighty!' over and over again.

"For many minutes I stood thus. Then I looked down at that pitiful heap of clothing, and around about the empty room, and it came over me that I was alone; my friend was gone—never to return! From a feeling of grief to one of terror was a rapid transition, and presently I realized my situation. There must be no evidence of Tillinghast's death in my room! I removed all trace with ease, for I applied

the liquid form of my destructive element to the clothing, and lo! it was gone also.

"Now, understand me, Bartley; I should not have been a man if this episode had not shocked me. I was sadly affected that I had deliberately permitted a friend to die; I was terrified at the thought of the possible discovery of the facts. Had it not been a friend, and had there not been a possibility of dangerous consequences to me, I could have looked upon the matter with the calmness of a true scientist, to whom all truth is right. As it was, however, I came near weakening, and my only salvation lay in you. You recall the night we informed the police? I was running like mad after a fire-engine, trying blindly to escape my thoughts, when I saw you at the corner. I stopped at once, and the way to safety flashed over me. By blinding your eyes, or rather by relying on their blindness to evil in me, I could protect myself from myself. I have succeeded, and now that I have made you a partaker of my knowledge, I feel that I shall not again falter."

There was a silence of a full minute. Then Bartley O'Meara said slowly :

"Aleck, I don't believe you. I think you are crazy."

Trask turned very pale and an angry look came into his eyes. He left the room, and after a brief absence returned with a kitten in his hands.

"See for yourself," he said, harshly.

He removed the cloth from the apparatus, did something to it that Bartley did not fully comprehend, and removed the cap from the nozzle.

"Watch!" he exclaimed as he held the kitten before the instrument. The little animal blink'd one way and another for a moment until Trask turned her head so that she looked straight in the tube. There was an instant quivering, an appearance of mist, and Trask's hands were empty.

"Great God!" whispered O'Meara, choking and feeling himself grow sick. "How have you done that?"

"Bartley!" exclaimed Trask in a stern voice, "the secret of material dissolution is dangerous enough if kept by one man!"

"But can you not restore, rematerialize the matter?" asked O'Meara in a tremulous voice.

"No. One great force, the sum of all forces alone can do that. That force, Bartley, is God!"

They had been standing with their hats on, but at this, both instinctively uncovered their heads, and O'Meara made the sign of the cross. Then he fell forward in a faint.

Several days later lawyer Bartley O'Meara recovered from an attack of nervous prostration, and the events of the previous five weeks seemed unreal. But there was a letter among his accumulated mail that recalled them all. It read:

DEAR BARTLEY,—My secret is too great to be borne. It is destructive—worse than useless. I am indeed a murderer—. When I have written this I shall follow him. I have arranged a weight that shall fall when my material form dissolves, and falling it will destroy my apparatus beyond repair and my discoveries beyond finding again. Come to my room if you wish to receive the final proof of my work.

ALECK.

Lawyer O'Meara went to the writer's lodging. The landlord had been thinking for several days of unlocking Mr. Trask's room to see if anything were wrong with him, and was therefore not averse to admitting one of his friends. The key was turned and Bartley entered. Crushed under an iron block was a mass of various colored glass and metals. A cord on the floor and a ring in the ceiling showed how the weight had been suspended.

On the floor, near the fragments of the apparatus, was a heap of garments which Lawyer O'Meara recognized as the clothing of his strange friend, Alexander Trask.

THE BROKEN CUP

BY HEINRICH ZSCHOKKE

Famous Story Series

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AUTHOR'S NOTE

There is extant, under this name, a short piece by the author of *Little Kate of Heilbronn*. That and the tale which here follows, originated in an incident which took place at Bern in the year 1802. Henry Von Kleist and Ludwig Wieland, the son of the poet, were both friends of the writer, in whose chamber hung an engraving called *La Cruelle Cassée*, the persons and contents of which resembled the scene set forth below, under the head of *The Tribunal*. The drawing, which was full of expression, gave great delight to those who saw it, and led to many conjectures as to its meaning. The three friends agreed, in sport, that they would each one day commit to writing his peculiar interpretation of its design. Wieland promised a satire; Von Kleist threw off a comedy; and the author of the following tale, what is here given.

MARIETTA.



THAT Napoule is only a very little place on the bay of Cannes is true; yet it is pretty well known through all Provence. It lies in the shade of lofty evergreen palms, and darker orange trees; but that alone would not make it renowned. Still they say that there are grown the most luscious grapes, the sweetest roses, and the handsomest girls. I don't know but it is so; in the meantime I believe it most readily. Pity that Napoule is so small, and cannot produce more luscious grapes, fragrant roses, and handsome maidens; especially, as we might then have some of them transplanted to our own country.

As, ever since the foundation of Napoule, all the Napoulese women have been beauties, so the little Marietta was a wonder of wonders, as the chronicles of the place declare. She was called the little Marietta; yet she was not smaller than a girl of seventeen or thereabouts ought to

This charming and idyllic story is taken from Wiley and Putnam's "Library of Choice Reading," for which it was translated by P. G. Illustrated for Short Stories by Abbey Underwood.

be, seeing that her forehead just reached up to the lips of a grown man.

The chronicles aforesaid had very good ground for speaking of Marietta. I, had I stood in the shoes of the chronicler, would have done the same. For Marietta, who until lately had lived with her mother Manon at Avignon, when she came back to her birthplace, quite upset the whole village. Verily, not the houses, but the people and their heads; and not the heads of all the people, but of those particularly whose heads and hearts are always in danger when in the neighborhood of two bright eyes. I know very well that such a position is no joke.



Mother Manon would have done much better if she had remained at Avignon. But she had been left a small inheritance, by which she received at Napoule an estate consisting of some vine-hills, and a house that lay in the shadow of a rock, between certain olive trees and African acacias. This is a kind of thing which no unprovided widow ever rejects; and, accordingly, in her own estimation, she was as rich and happy as though she were the Countess of Provence or something like it.

So much the worse was it for the good people of Napoule. They never suspected their misfortune, not having read in Homer, how a single pretty woman had filled all Greece and Lesser Asia with discord and war. .

HOW THE MISFORTUNE CAME ABOUT.

Marietta had scarcely been fourteen days in the house, between the olive trees and the African acacias, before every young man of Napoule knew that she lived there, and that there lived not, in all Provence, a more charming girl than the one in that house.

Went she through the village, sweeping lightly along like a dressed-up angel, her frock, with its pale-green bodice, and orange-leaves and rose-buds upon the bosom of it, fluttering in the breeze, and flowers and ribbons waving about the straw bonnet, which shaded her beautiful features,—yes, then the grave old men spake out, and the young ones were

struck dumb. And everywhere, to the right and left, little windows and doors were opened with "a good-morning," or "a good-evening, Marietta," as it might be, while she nodded to the right and left with a pleasant smile.

If Marietta walked into church, all hearts (that is, of the young people) forgot Heaven; all eyes turned from the saints, and the worshiping finger wandered idly among the pearls of the rosary. This must certainly have provoked much sorrow, at least, among the more devout.

The maidens of Napoule particularly, became very pious about this time, for they, most of all, took the matter to heart. And they were not to be blamed for it; for since the advent of Marietta, more than one prospective groom had become cold, and more than one worshiper of some beloved one, quite inconstant. There were bickerings and reproaches on all sides, many tears, pertinent lectures, and even rejections. The talk was no longer of marriages, but of separations. They began to return their pledges of truth, rings, ribbons, etc. The old persons took part with their children; criminations and strife spread from house to house: it was most deplorable.

Marietta is the cause of all, said the pious maidens, first; then, the mothers said it; next the fathers took it up; and finally, all—even the young men. But Marietta, shielded by her modesty and innocence, like the petals of the rose-bud in its dark green calix, did not suspect the mischief of which she was the occasion, and continued courteous to everybody. This touched the young men, who said, "why condemn the pure and harmless child—she is not guilty!" Then the fathers said the same thing; then the mothers took it up, and finally, all—even the pious maidens. For, let who would talk with Marietta, she was sure to gain their esteem. So before half a year had passed, every body had spoken to her, and every body loved her. But she did not suspect that she was the object of such general regard, as she had not before suspected that she was the object of dislike. Does the violet, hidden in the downtrodden grass, think how sweet it is?

Now, everyone wished to make amends for the injustice they had done Marietta. Sympathy deepened the tenderness of their attachment. Marietta found herself greeted everywhere in a more friendly way than ever; she was more

cordially welcomed; more heartily invited to the rural sports and dances.

ABOUT THE WICKED COLIN.

All men, however, are not endowed with tender sympathy; some have hearts hardened like Pharaoh's. This arises, no doubt, from that natural depravity which has come upon men in consequence of the fall of Adam, or because, at their baptism, the devil is not brought sufficiently under subjection.

A remarkable example of this hardness of heart was given by one Colin, the richest farmer and proprietor in Napoule, whose vineyards and olive gardens, whose lemon and orange trees could hardly be counted in a day. One thing particularly demonstrates the perverseness of his disposition; he was twenty-seven years old, and had never yet asked for what purpose girls had been created!

True, all the people, especially damsels of a certain age, willingly forgave him this sin, and looked upon him as one of the best young men under the sun. His fine figure, his fresh, unembarrassed manner, his look, his laugh, enabled him to gain the favorable opinion of the aforesaid people, who would have forgiven him, had there been occasion, any one of the deadly sins. But the decision of such judges is not always to be trusted.

While both old and young at Napoule had become reconciled to the innocent Marietta, and proffered their sympathies to her, Colin was the only one who had no pity upon the poor child. If Marietta was talked of, he became as dumb as a fish. If he met her in the street, he would turn red and white with anger, and cast sidelong glances at her of the most malicious kind.

If at evening, the young people met upon the seashore near the old castle ruins for sprightly pastimes, or rural dances, or to sing catches, Colin was the merriest among them. But as soon as Marietta arrived the rascally fellow was silent, and all the gold in the world couldn't make him sing. What a

pity, when he had such a fine voice! Everybody listened to it so willingly, and its store of songs was endless.

All the maidens looked kindly upon Colin, and he was friendly with all of them. He had, as we have said, a roguish glance, which the lasses feared and loved; and it was so sweet they would like to have had it painted. But, as might naturally be expected, the offended Marietta did not look graciously upon him. And in that she was perfectly right. Whether he smiled or not, it was all the same to her. As to his roguish glance, why she would never hear it mentioned; and therein too she was perfectly right. When he told a tale (and he knew thousands) and everybody listened, she nudged her neighbor, or perhaps threw tufts of grass at Peter or Paul, and laughed and chattered, and did not listen to Colin at all. This behavior quite provoked the proud fellow, so that he would break off in the middle of his story and stalk sullenly away.

Revenge is sweet. The daughter of Mother Manon well knew how to triumph. Yet Marietta was a right good child and quite too tender-hearted. If Colin was silent, it gave her pain. If he was downcast, she laughed no more. If he went away, she did not stay long behind: but hurried to her home, and wept tears of repentance, more beautiful than those of the Magdalen, although she had not sinned like the Magdalen.

THE CUP.

Father Jerome, the pastor of Napoule, was an old man of seventy, who possessed all the virtues of a saint, and only one failing; which was, that by reason of his advanced years, he was hard of hearing. But, on that very account, his homilies were more acceptable to the children of his baptism and blessing. True, he preached only of two subjects, as if they comprehended the whole of religion. It was either "Little children, love one another," or it was "Mysterious are the ways of Providence." And truly there is so much Faith, Love and Hope in these, that one might at a pinch be saved by them. The little children loved one another most

obediently, and trusted in the ways of Providence. Only Colin, with his flinty heart, would know nothing of either: for even when he professed to be friendly, he entertained the deepest malice.

The Napoulese went to the annual market or fair of the city of Vence. It was truly a joyful time, and though they had but little gold to buy with, there were many goods to look at. Now Marietta and Mother Nanon went to the fair with the rest, and Colin was also there. He bought a great many curiosities and trifles for his friends—but he would not spend a farthing for Marietta. And yet he was always at her elbow, though he did not speak to her, nor she to him. It was easy to see that he was brooding over some scheme of wickedness.

Mother Manon stood gazing before a shop, when she suddenly exclaimed, "Oh! Marietta, see that beautiful cup! A queen would not be ashamed to raise it to her lips. Only see: the edge is of dazzling gold, and the flowers upon it



could not bloom more beautifully in the garden, although they are only painted. And in the midst of this Paradise! pray see, Marietta, how the apples are smiling on the trees. They are verily tempting.

And Adam cannot withstand it, as the enohanting Eve offers him one for food! And do see, how prettily the little frisking lamb skips around the old tiger, and the snow-white dove with its golden throat stands there before the vulture, as if she would caress him!"

Marietta could not satisfy herself with looking. "Had I such a cup, mother!" said she, "it is far too beautiful to drink out of: I would place my flowers in it and constantly peep into Paradise. We are at the fair in Vence, but when I look on the picture I feel as if I were in Paradise."

So spoke Marietta, and called her companion to the spot, to share her admiration of the cup: but the young men soon joined the maidens, until at length almost half the inhabitants of Napoule were assembled before the wonderfully beautiful cup. But miraculously beautiful was it mainly from its inestimable, translucent porcelain, with gilded handles and glowing colors. They asked the merchant timidly: "Sir, what is the price of it?" And he answered: "Among friends, it is worth a hundred livres." Then they all became

silent, and went away in despair. When the Napoulese were all gone from the front of the shop, Colin came there by stealth, threw the merchant a hundred livres upon the counter, had the cup put in a box well packed with cotton, and then carried it off. What evil plans he had in view no one would have surmised.

Near Napoule, on his way home, it being already dusk, he met old Jacques, the Justice's servant, returning from the fields. Jacques was a very good man, but excessively stupid.

"I will give thee money enough to get something to drink, Jacques," said Colin, "if thou wilt bear this box to Manon's house, and leave it there; and if any one should see thee, and inquire from whom the box came, say 'A stranger gave it to me.' But never disclose my name, or I will always detest thee."

Jacques promised this, took the drink-money and the box, and went with it toward the little dwelling, between the olive trees and the African acacias.

THE CARRIER.

Before he arrived there he encountered his master, Justice Hautmartin, who asked, "Jacques, what art thou carrying?"

"A box for Mother Manon. But, sir, I cannot say from whom it comes."

"Why not?"

"Because Colin would always detest me."

"It is well that thou canst keep a secret. But it is already late; give me the box, for I am going to-morrow to see Mother Manon; I will deliver it to her and not betray that it came from Colin. It will save thee a walk, and furnish me a good excuse for calling on the old lady."

Jacques gave the box to his master, whom he was accustomed to obey implicitly in all things. The justice bore it into his chamber, and examined it by the light with some curiosity. On the lid was neatly written with red chalk: "For the lovely and dear Marietta." But Monsieur Hautmartin well knew that this was some of Colin's mischief, and that some knavish trick lurked under the whole. He therefore opened the box carefully for fear that a mouse or rat should be concealed within. When he beheld the wondrous



cup, which he had seen at Vence, he was dreadfully shocked, for Monsieur Hautmartin was a skillful casuist, and knew that the inventions and devices of the human heart are evil from our youth upward. He saw at once that Colin designed this cup as a means of bringing misfortune upon Marietta: perhaps to give out, when it should be in her possession, that it was the present of some successful lover in the town, or the like, so that all decent people would thereafter keep aloof from Marietta. Therefore Monsieur Hautmartin resolved, in order to prevent any evil reports, to profess himself the giver. Moreover, he loved Marietta, and would gladly have seen her observe more strictly towards himself the sayings of the gray-headed priest Jerome, "Little children, love one another." In truth Monsieur Hautmartin was a little child of fifty years old, and Marietta did not think the saying applied particularly to him. Mother Manon, on the contrary,

thought that the justice was a clever little child, he had gold and a high reputation from one end of Napoule to the other. And when the justice spoke of marriage, and Marietta ran away in affright, Mother Manon remained sitting, and had no fear for the tall, staid gentleman. It must also be confessed there were no faults

in his person. And although Colin might be the handsomest man in the village, yet the justice far surpassed him in two things, namely, in the number of years, and in a very, very big nose. Yes, this nose, which always went before the justice like a herald to proclaim his approach, was a real elephant among human noses.

With this proboscis, his good purpose, and the cup, the justice went the following morning to the house between the olive trees and the African acacias.

"For the beautiful Marietta," said he, "I hold nothing too costly. Yesterday you admired the cup at Vence; to-day allow me, lovely Marietta, to lay it and my devoted heart at your feet."

Manon and Marietta were transported beyond measure when they beheld the cup. Manon's eyes glistened with delight, but Marietta turned and said, "I can neither take your heart nor your cup."

Then Mother Manon was angry, and cried out: "But I accept both heart and cup. O, thou little fool, how long wilt thou despise thy good fortune! For whom dost thou tarry? Will a count of Provence make thee his bride, that thou scornest the Justice of Napoule? I know better how to look after my interests. Monsieur Hautmartin, I deem it an honor to call thee my son-in-law."

Then Marietta went out and wept bitterly, and hated the beautiful cup with all her heart.

But the justice, drawing the palm of his flabby hand over his nose, spoke thus judiciously:

"Mother Manon, hurry nothing. The dove will at length, when it learns to know me better, give way. I am not impetuous. I have some skill among women, and before a quarter of a year passes by I will insinuate myself into Marietta's good graces."

"Thy nose is too large for that," whispered Marietta, who listened outside the door and laughed to herself. In fact, the quarter of a year passed by and Monsieur Hautmartin had not yet pierced the heart even with the tip of his nose.

THE FLOWERS.

During this quarter of a year Marietta had other affairs to attend to. The cup gave her much vexation and trouble, and something else besides.

For a fortnight nothing else was talked of in Napoule, and every one said, it is a present from the justice, and the marriage is already agreed upon. Marietta solemnly declared to all her companions that she would rather plunge to the bottom of the sea than marry the justice, but the maidens continued to banter her all the more, saying, "Oh, how blissful it must be to repose in the shadow of his nose!" This was her first vexation.

Then Mother Manon had the cruelty to force Marietta to rinse out the cup every morning at the spring under the rock and to fill it with fresh flowers. She hoped by this to accustom Marietta to the cup and heart of the giver. But Marietta continued to hate both the gift and giver, and her work at the spring became an actual punishment. Second vexation.

Then, when in the morning, she came to the spring, twice every week she found on the rock, immediately over it, some

most beautiful flowers, handsomely arranged, all ready for the decoration of the cup. And on the flower-stalks a strip of paper was always tied, on which was written, "Dear Marietta." Now no one need expect to impose upon little Marietta, as if magicians and fairies were still in the world. Consequently, she knew that both the flowers and papers must have come from Monsieur Hautmartin. Marietta, indeed, would not smell them because the living breath from out of the justice's nose had perfumed them. Nevertheless, she took the flowers, because they were finer than wild flowers, and tore the slip of paper into a thousand pieces, which she strewed upon the spot where the flowers usually lay. But this did not vex Justice Hautmartin, whose love was unparalleled in its kind as his nose was in its kind. Third vexation.

At length it came out in conversation with Monsieur Hautmartin, that he was not the giver of the beautiful flowers. Then, who could it be? Marietta was utterly astounded at the unexpected discovery. Thenceforth she took the flowers from the rock more kindly; but further, Marietta was,—what maidens are not wont to be,—very inquisitive. She conjectured first this and then that young man in Napoule. Yet her conjectures were in vain. She looked and listened far into the night; she rose earlier than usual. But she looked and listened in vain. And still twice a week in the morning, the miraculous flowers lay upon the rock, and upon the strip of paper wound round them she always read the silent sigh, "Dear Marietta!" Such an incident would have made even the most indifferent inquisitive. But curiosity at length became a burning pain. Fourth vexation.

WICKEDNESS UPON WICKEDNESS.

Now Father Jerome, on Sunday, had again preached from the text, "Mysterious are the dispensations of Providence." And little Marietta thought, if Providence would only dispense that I might at length find out who is the flower dispenser. Father Jerome was never wrong.

On a summer night, when it was far too warm to rest, Marietta awoke very early, and could not resume her sleep.

Therefore she sprang joyously from her couch as the first streaks of dawn flashed against the window of her little chamber, over the waves of the sea and the Lerinian Isles, dressed herself, and went out to wash her forehead, breast and arms in the cool spring. She took her hat with her, intending to take a walk by the seashore, as she knew of a retired place for bathing.

In order to reach this retired spot, it was necessary to pass over the rocks behind the house, and thence down through the orange and palm trees. On this occasion Marietta could not pass through them; for, under the youngest and most slender of the palms lay a tall young man in profound sleep—near him a nosegay of most splendid flowers. A white paper lay thereon, from which probably a sigh was again breathing. How could Marietta get by there?

She stood still, trembling with fright. She would go home again. Hardly has she retreated a couple of steps, ere she looked again at the sleeper, and remained motionless. Yet the distance prevented her from recognizing his face. Now the mystery was to be solved, or never. She tripped lightly nearer to the palms; but he seemed to stir—then she ran again towards the cottage. His movements were but the fearful imaginings of Marietta. Now she returned again on her way towards the palms; but his sleep might perhaps be only dissembled—swiftly she ran towards the cottage—but who would flee for a mere probability? She trod more boldly the path towards the palms.

With these fluctuations of her timid and joyous spirit, between fright and curiosity, with these to-and-fro trippings between the house and the palm-trees, she at length nearly approached the sleeper; at the same time curiosity became more powerful than fear.

“What is he to me? My way leads me directly past him. Whether he sleeps or wake, I will go straight on.” So thought Manon’s daughter. But she passed not by, but stood looking directly in the face of the flower-giver, in order to be certain who it was. Besides, he slept as if it were the first time in a month. And who was it? Now, who else should it be but the arch, wicked Colin.

So it was *he* who had annoyed the gentle maiden, and given her so much trouble with Monsieur Hautmartin, because he bore a grudge against her; he had been the one who had

teased her with flowers, in order to torture her curiosity. Wherefore? He hated Marietta. He behaved himself always most shamefully toward the poor child. He avoided her when he could; and when he could not, he grieved the good-natured little one. With all the other maidens of Napoule he was more chatty, friendly, courteous, than toward Marietta. Consider—he had never once asked her to dance, and yet she danced bewitchingly.

Now there he lay, surprised, taken in the act. Revenge swelled in Marietta's bosom. What disgrace could she subject him to? She took the nosegay, unloosened it, strewed his present over the sleeper in scorn. But the paper, on which appeared again the sigh "Dear Marietta!" she retained, and thrust quickly into her bosom. She wished to preserve this proof of his handwriting. Marietta was sly. Now she would go away. But her revenge was not yet satisfied. She could not leave the place without returning Colin's ill-will. She took the violet-colored silken ribbon from her hat, and threw it lightly around the sleeper's arm and around the tree, and with three knots tied Colin fast. Now when he awoke, how astonished he would be! How his curiosity would torment him to ascertain who had played him this trick!—That he could not possibly discover. So much the better; it served him right.

Marietta had only been too lenient towards him. She seemed to regret her work when she had finished it. Her bosom throbbed impetuously. Indeed, I believe that a little tear filled her eye, as she compassionately gazed upon the guilty one. Slowly she retreated to the orange grove by the rocks—she looked around often—slowly ascended the rocks, looking down among the palm trees as she ascended. Then she hastened to Mother Manon, who was calling her.

THE HAT BAND.

That very day Colin practised new mischief. What did he? He wished to shame the poor Marietta publicly. Ah! she never thought that everyone in Napoule knew her violet colored ribbon! Colin remembered it but too well. Proudly he bound it around his hat, and exhibited it to the gaze of all the world as a conquest. And male and female cried out, "he has received it from Marietta."—And all the maidens said angrily "The reprobate!" And all the young men who liked to see Marietta, cried out, "The reprobate!"

"How! Mother Manon?" shrieked the Justice Hautmartin when he came to her house, and he shrieked so loudly, that it re-echoed wonderfully through his nose. "How! do you suffer this? my betrothed presents the young proprietor Colin with her hat-band! It is high time that we celebrate our nuptials. When that is over, then I shall have a right to speak."

"You have a right!" answered Mother Manon, "if things are so, the marriage must take place forthwith. When that is done, all will go right."

"But, Mother Manon, Marietta always refuses to give me her consent."

"Prepare the marriage feast."

"But she will not even look kindly at me; and when I seat myself at her side, the little savage jumps up and runs away."

"Justice, only prepare the marriage feast."

"But if Marietta resists—"

"We will take her by surprise. We will go to Father Jerome on Monday morning early, and he shall quietly celebrate the marriage. This we can easily accomplish with him. I am her mother. You the first judicial person in Napoule. He must obey. Marietta need know nothing about it. Early on Monday morning I will send her to Father Jerome all alone, with a message so that she will suspect nothing. Then the priest shall speak earnestly to her. Half an hour afterwards we two will come. Then swiftly to the altar. And even if Marietta should then say No, what consequence is it? The old priest can hear nothing. But till then, mum to Marietta and all Napoule."

So the secret remained with the two. Marietta dreamed not of the good luck which was in store for her. She thought only of Colin's wickedness, which had made her the common talk of the whole place. Oh! how she repented her heedlessness about the ribbon; and yet in her heart she forgave the reprobate his crime. Marietta was far too good. She told her mother, she told all her playmates, "Colin has found my lost band. I never gave it to him. He only wishes to vex me with it. You all know that Colin was always ill-disposed towards me, and always sought to mortify me!"

Ah! the poor child! she knew not what new abomination the malicious fellow was again contriving.

THE BROKEN CUP.

Early in the morning Marietta went to the spring with the cup. There were no flowers yet on the rock. It was still quite too early; for the sun had scarcely risen from the sea.

Footsteps were heard. Colin came in sight, the flowers in his hand. Marietta became very red. Colin stammered out "Good-morning, Marietta," but the greeting came not from his heart, he could hardly bring it over his lips.

"Why dost thou wear my ribbon so publicly, Colin?" said Marietta, and placed the cup upon the rock. "I did not give it thee."

"Thou didst not give it to me, dear Marietta?" asked he, and inward rage made him deadly pale.

Marietta was ashamed of the falsehood, drooped her eyelids, and said after a while, "Well, I did give it to thee, yet thou shouldst not have worn it so openly. Give it me back again."

Slowly he untied it; his anger was so great that he could not prevent the tears from filling his eyes, nor the sighs from escaping his breast.—
"Dear Marietta, leave thy ribbon with me," said he softly.

"No," answered she.

Then his suppressed passion changed into desperation. Sighing, he looked towards heaven, then sadly on Marietta, who, silent and abashed, stood by the spring with downcast eyes.

He wound the violet-colored ribbon around the stalks of the flowers, said, "There, take them all," and threw the flowers so spitefully against the magnificent cup upon the rock, that it was thrown down and dashed to pieces. Maliciously he fled away.

Mother Manon lurking behind the window, had seen and heard all. When the cup broke, hearing and sight left her. She was scarcely able to speak for very horror. And as she pushed with all her strength against the narrow window, to shout after the guilty one, it gave way, and with one crash fell to earth and was shattered in pieces.

So much ill-luck would have discomposed any other woman. But Manon soon recovered herself. "How lucky that

I was a witness to this roguery!" exclaimed she; "he must to the justice—he shall replace both cup and window-sash with his gold. It will give a rich dowry to Marietta." But when Marietta brought in the fragments of the shattered cup, when Manon saw the Paradise lost, the good man Adam without a head, and of Eve not a solitary limb remaining, the serpent unhurt, triumphing, the tiger safe, but the little lamb gone even to the very tail, as if the tiger had swallowed it, then Mother Manon screamed forth curses against Colin, and said, "One can easily see that this *fall* came from the hand of the devil."

THE TRIBUNAL.

She took the cup, in one hand, Marietta in the other, and went about nine o'clock to where Monsieur Hautmartin was wont to sit in judgment. She there made a great outcry, and showed the broken cup and the Paradise lost. Marietta wept bitterly.

The justice, when he saw the broken cup and his beautiful bride in tears, flew into so violent a rage towards Colin, that his nose was as violet-colored as Marietta's well-known hat-band. He immediately despatched his bailiffs to bring the criminal before him.

Colin came overwhelmed with grief. Mother Manon now repeated her complaint with great eloquence, before justice, bailiffs and scribes.—But Colin listened not. He stepped to Marietta and whispered to her, "Forgive me, dear Marietta, as I forgive thee. I broke thy cup unintentionally; but thou, thou hast broken my heart!"

"What whispering is that?" cried Justice Hautmartin, with magisterial authority. "Hearken to this accusation, and defend yourself."

"I have naught to defend. I broke the cup against my will," said Colin.

"That I verily believe," said Marietta, sobbing. "I am as guilty as he; for I offended and angered him,—then he threw the ribbon and flowers to me. He could not help it."

"Well, I should like to know!" cried Mother Manon. "Do you intend to defend him? Mr. Justice, pronounce his sentence. He has broken the cup, and he does not deny it. Let us see."

"Since you cannot deny it, Mr. Colin," said the justice,

"you must pay three hundred livres for the cup, for it is worth that; and then for—"

"No," interrupted Colin, "it is not worth so much. I bought it at Vence for Marietta, for one hundred livres."

"You bought it, Sir brazen face?" shrieked the justice, and his whole face became like Marietta's hat-band. He could not and would not say more, for he dreaded a disagreeable investigation of the matter.

But Colin was vexed at the imputation, and said, "I sent this cup on the evening of the fair, by your own servant, to Marietta. There stands Jaques in the door. Speak, Jaques, did I not give thee the box to carry to Mother Manon?"

Monsieur Hautmartin wished to interrupt this conversation by speaking loudly. But the simple Jaques said, "Only recollect, Justice, you took away Colin's box from me, and carried what was in it to Mother Manon. The box lies even now, there under the papers."

Then the bailiffs were ordered to remove the simpleton; and Colin was also directed to retire, until he should be sent for again.

"Very well, Mr. Justice," interposed Colin, "but this business shall be your last in Napoule. I know this, that you would ingratiate yourself with Mother Manon and Marietta, by means of my property. When you want me, you will have to ride to Grasse to the Governor's." With that, Colin departed.

Monsieur Hautmartin was quite puzzled with this affair, and in his confusion, knew not what he was about. Manon shook her head. The affair was dark and mysterious to her. "Who will now pay me for the broken cup?" she asked.

"To me," said Marietta, with glowing, brightened countenance, "to *me* it is already paid for."

MYSTERIOUS DISPENSATIONS.

Colin rode that same day to the governor at Grasse, and came back early the next morning. But Justice Hautmartin only laughed at him, and removed all of Mother Manon's suspicions by swearing he would let his nose be cut off if Colin did not pay three hundred livres for the broken cup. He also went with Mother Manon to talk with Father Jerome about the marriage, and impressed upon him the necessity of earnestly setting before Marietta her duty as an obedient

daughter of not opposing the will of her mother in her marriage. This the pious old man promised, although he understood not the half of what they shouted in his ear.

When Monday morning came Mother Manon said to her daughter, "Dress yourself handsomely, and carry this myrtle wreath to Father Jerome; he wants it for a bride." Marietta dressed herself in her Sunday clothes, took the myrtle wreath unsuspectingly, and carried it to Father Jerome.

On the way Colin met her, and greeted her joyfully, though timidly; and when she told him where she was taking the wreath, Colin said, "I am going the same way, for I am carrying the money for the church's tenths to the priest." And as they went on he took her hand silently, and both trembled as if they designed some crime against each other.

"Hast thou forgiven me?" whispered Colin, anxiously. "Ah! Marietta, what have I done to thee, that thou art so cruel towards me?"

She could only say, "Be quiet, Colin, you shall have the ribbon again; and I will preserve the cup since it came from you! Did it really come from you?"

"Ah! Marietta, canst thou doubt it? All I have I would gladly give thee. Wilt thou, hereafter, be as kind to me as thou art to others?"

She replied not. But as she entered the parsonage she looked aside at him, and when she saw his fine eyes filled with tears, she whispered softly, "Dear Colin!" Then he bent down and kissed her hand. With this the door of a chamber opened and Father Jerome, with venerable aspect, stood before them. The young couple had nearly fallen from giddiness, and they held fast to each other. I know not whether this was the effect of the hand-kissing, or the awe they felt for the sage.

Marietta handed him the myrtle wreath. He laid it upon her head and said, "Little children, love one another;" and then urged the good maiden, in the most touching and pathetic manner, to love Colin. For the old gentleman, from his hardness of hearing, had either mistaken the name of the bridegroom, or from want of memory forgotten it, and thought Colin must be the bridegroom.

Then Marietta's heart softened under the exhortation of the venerable Father, and with tears and sobs she exclaimed, "Ah! I have loved him for a long time, but he hates me."

"I, hate thee, Marietta," cried Colin. "My soul has lived only in thee since thou camest to Napoule. Oh! Marietta, how could I hope and believe that thou didst love me? Does not all Napoule worship thee?"

"Why, then, dost thou avoid me, Colin, and prefer all my companions before me?"

"Oh! Marietta, I feared and trembled with love and anxiety when I beheld thee; I had not the courage to approach thee; and when I was away from thee I was most miserable."

As they talked thus with each other the good father thought they were quarreling; and he threw his arms around them, brought them together, and said imploringly, "Little children; little children, love one another."

Then Marietta sank on Colin's breast, and Colin threw his arms around her, and both faces beamed with rapture. They forgot the priest, the whole world. Colin's lips hung upon Marietta's sweet mouth. It was indeed only a kiss, but a kiss of sweetest self-forgetfulness. Each was sunk into the other. Both had so completely lost their recollection that, unwittingly, they followed the delighted Father Jerome into the church and before the altar.

"Marietta!" sighed he.

"Colin!" sighed she.

In the church there were many devout worshipers; but they witnessed Colin's and Marietta's marriage with amazement. Many ran out before the close of the ceremony, to spread the news in every direction throughout Napoule: "Colin and Marietta are married."

When the solemnization was over, Father Jerome rejoiced that he had succeeded so well, and that such little opposition had been made by the parties. He led them into the parsonage.

END OF THIS MEMORABLE HISTORY.

Then Mother Manon, arrived, breathless; she had waited at home a long time for the bridegroom. He had not arrived. At the last stroke of the clock she grew anxious and went to Monsieur Hautmartin's. There a new surprise awaited her. She learned that the governor, together with the officers of the Viguerie, had appeared and taken possession of the accounts, chests, and papers of the justice, and at the same time arrested Monsieur Hautmartin.

"This, surely, is the work of that wicked Colin," thought she, and hurried to the parsonage in order to apologize to Father Jerome for delaying the marriage. The good gray-headed old man advanced towards her, proud of his work, and leading by the hand the newly-married pair.

Now Mother Manon lost her wits and her speech in good earnest when she learned what had happened. But Colin had more thoughts and power of speech than in his whole previous life. He told of his love and the broken cup, the falsehood of the justice, and how he had unmasked this unjust magistrate in the Viguerie at Grasse. Then he besought Mother Manon's blessing, since all this had happened without any fault on the part of Marietta or himself.

Father Jerome, who for a long while could not make out what had happened, when he received a full explanation of the marriage through mistake, piously folded his hands and exclaimed, with uplifted eyes, "Wonderful are the dispensations of Providence!" Colin and Marietta kissed his hands; Mother Manon, through sheer veneration of heaven, gave the young couple her blessing, but remarked incidentally that her head seemed turned round.

Mother Manon herself was pleased with her son-in-law when she came to know the full extent of his property, and especially when she found that Monsieur Hautmartin and his nose had been taken as prisoner to Grasse.

"But am I then really a wife?" asked Marietta; "and really Colin's wife?"

Mother Manon nodded her head, and Marietta hung upon Colin's arm. Thus they went to Colin's farm, to his dwelling-house, through the garden.

"Look at the flowers, Marietta," said Colin; "how carefully I cultivated them for your cup!"

Colin, who had not expected so pleasant an event, now prepared a wedding feast on the spur of the occasion. Two days was it continued. All Napoule was feasted. Who shall describe Colin's rapture and extravagance?

The broken cup is preserved in the family to the present day as a memorial and sacred relic.



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Peach-Blossom

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(Illustrated)

The Little Grey Man

By E. Laboulaye
(Illustrated)

Loulette

By Ruth Lawrence
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"Reddy"

By Walter J. Davis

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PEACH-BLOSSOM*

BY LOUIS ÉNAULT

I had been at Damascus for two months, and was beginning to find the time a little long; so it was really with enthusiasm that I received the proposition to take a turn beyond the walls, which was made me in the intervals between two Latakié cigarettes by Count Jean Imérieff, one of the most delightful travelling companions that heaven had ever vouchsafed me on my journey, or rather on my journeys.

"And where shall we go?"

"Not far from here, half a league from town, at the Der-vish's spring, under the plane-trees of St. Paul."

*The story of an Arab's love for his horse. Translated from the French by Bertha Favard for Short Stories—Copyrighted. Illustrations after Fromentin.

“Agreed. On with your Dervishes and your plane-trees—but what shall we do when we get there?”

“See a horse.”

“But I’ve seen so many in the last six months!”

“Not like the one I am going to show you. This horse or rather this mare, is as celebrated now in the Orient, as was formerly the one that carried Mahomet and the Koran. She belongs to history, and will some day be legendary. Her owner is one of those chiefs of rebellious tribes that reign on the frontiers of the Ottoman Empire. They live by pillaging caravans, ransoming travelers, by thieving of every description, and deserve from their tenderest infancy only the summary justice of the Turkish executioner’s sword. But this chief’s mare is none the less beautiful; and she is known as the most intrepid “drinker of air” in all Yrak, which, as you know, is the region between Bagdad and Bassorah, on the shores of the Euphrates, filled with pasture lands, and the home of the most beautiful horses in the world.

“The reputation of this marvelous creature came to our ears, and Prince Kurieff, who is a great favorite at court, was carried away by the desire to take her back with him to Russia for our studs. Negotiations were entered upon quite a long time ago, but without result until to-day, when a clever little Jew, an agent in all sorts of transactions, capable of selling Constantinople to the Czar and St. Petersburg to the Sultan, came this morning to announce to the prince that the bargain was concluded—the mare is to be his for sixteen thousand dollars, payable in gold, and the exchange is to take place to-morrow, but he must pay to the last penny—no money, no horse.

“The prince naturally accepted at once, though the price might seem a little high; but, you know, in the Orient, contrary to our custom, mares bring a higher price than horses. However, at the last moment, the Sheik—one could scarcely pardon the caprice in a pretty woman—exacted that every gold piece should bear the effigy of Selim the Magnificent, during whose reign the handsomest money was coined. The Turks do not give themselves up as often as civilized nations to that alteration of their types which is disguised more or less skillfully under the title of recoinage; and so, though it was

a very difficult thing to do, it was not altogether impossible, and it has been done. Two or three bankers were reduced to their wits' ends, but the sum was at last collected, and is now with the prince. A courier was sent at once to inform Ishmael—he is the owner of the mare—and he is to come to-morrow to deliver the horse and receive the money. You can readily understand that the matter has made some little stir in the world. Damascus has as much village gossip as St. Petersburg, Vienna, or Paris. Everything is known here. Ishmael is a gentleman who is frequently the talk of Damascus, and it was with some excitement that it was learned he was to honor the little *fête* with his presence. There will be a great crowd under the plane-trees, for everybody will want to see him. He will not come without a great suite, for he is of rather a vain disposition. People are going there from Damascus as to a pleasure party. It will be a meeting of the desert and the city. Everything will contribute to make this reunion something quite unusual, and the queerness of the costumes, the variety of types, the famous mare herself, will be a sight of such a nature as I think would interest a traveller. Do you still want to join our party?"

"More than ever."

"We will meet to-morrow at 9 in the morning before the prince's house, a few steps from the mosques of St. James. I will introduce you to my Boyar, and you will form part of the official cortège. Au revoir."

You may imagine whether or not I was on time. In less than five minutes, all the little European colony was assembled before the prince's door. Seldom have I seen a handsomer collection of Arabian horses. The trappings may have been a little heterogeneous; there were Cairo saddles, easily to be recognized by their high cantles; French saddles, square and wide; and English saddles, no bigger than one's hands, but *à la guerre comme à la guerre*.

At 9 precisely, after congratulating the prince most heartily, we started off.

The road, which leads from Damascus to the Dervish's spring, was already crowded with eager sightseers, for every one was anxious to see a horse that was to bring such a price. The Turks, some of whom were the owners of very handsome horses, had taken great care not to leave them at

home on such a day, and the son of the governor rode about on a stallion from Nedji, black as ebony with a single tiny star upon his forehead, who certainly would have made more than one person on the right banks of the Lac du Bois de Boulogne turn to look at him. Rich bankers, grown corpulent from the sedentary labors of the office, bore down with their weight little black donkeys that carried them, groaning; and great, long, low carriages drawn by four oxen, like

the chariots of the French "do-nothing" kings, were filled with numbers of women, enveloped in the long folds of their yellow, blue, orange colored, or pale green *fèredjés*, of whom nothing could be seen but a white brow and a pair of eyes sparkling like black diamonds from behind their *yashmaks*.

At the end of half an hour, we arrived at the spot chosen for the meeting.

It would indeed have been hard to choose a better one. The Dervish's spring comes bubbling up out of the hollow of a rock, covered with mastic-trees, caroubiers and cactuses. The plane-trees which bear the name of Saint Paul, in honor of the great man who fell there, a persecutor, to arise an apostle, are magnificent things more than twenty centuries old, extending their robust arms so far and wide as to shelter an entire tribe beneath their leafage.

Stalls and well-filled booths were already erected in their shade by coffee sellers, venders of sherbet and lemonade, and youths who sell women and children their pastries, fruits and comfits. Everywhere could be felt that exciting animation, which always accompanies, in a crowd, the awaiting of any event somewhat out of the ordinary.

Not far from the plane-trees a little tent had been set up for the prince, and its looped-up curtains disclosed a table covered with a rug, on which the intendant was to count out the sixteen thousand dollars. These were guarded by two Russian peasants in national costume, who kept their right hands upon the cover of the little black casket that contained the gold.

The meeting was to take place at 10. At a few minutes to 10 we perceived a cloud of dust rising in the east.

It was coming toward us.

At about one hundred and fifty or two hundred steps from

our little camp it halted suddenly, and we were able to distinguish the horsemen of Ishmael mounted on their blooded steeds, which, on perceiving ours, threw back their splendid heads and neighed in accents as sonorous as a clarion. The men, who rode them, were clad in long mantles of camels'-hair with alternate stripes of white and fawn color, and wore white turbans from which gayly colored veils fluttered over their shoulders, half hiding their faces. They held long lances ornamented with a silken tassel, and each had a gun, banded with silver and inlaid with mother-of-pearl, slung from his shoulder. One of the men, mounted upon a stallion, whose gray coat was dappled like a trout, and which he managed with incomparable elegance and skill, left the group and came towards us.

With the exception of his turban, which was green, everything he wore was white. His skin, of a deep tawny hue, was lit up by the fire of two eyes as black as hell. He carried neither lance nor gun, but wore only a little dagger at his belt, whose sheath was set with uncut diamonds, rubies and emeralds. Everything about him bespoke the chief; his gesture, his bearing, his look.

When he drew near us, Ishmael—for it was he—sprang lightly to the ground, tossed the lines over his horse's head, tied them to his right leg, and whispered something in his ear which I did not catch.

From that time on the horse remained mute and immovable as if the wand of a magician had turned him suddenly into stone.

Ishmael surveyed us all with a sombre glance, and waited.

The Jew, who had acted as go-between in the negotiation, now drawing to its close, came at once to receive his orders. He spoke Arabic and Italian equally well, and was to serve as interpreter to the sheik and the prince.

Ishmael spoke a few words to him.

"Your Highness," said the Jew immediately, "Ishmael says his mare is ready, and he asks if the money is ready too."

The prince had no need to utter a word; he merely glanced at the two *moujicks* who opened the casket and began to count the gold whose glistening heaps were soon piled up upon the table.

Ishmael, on his side, turned to his men, and at that moment, two tiny *mouckres*—this is the name given to Oriental grooms—approached, leading by the bridle, which each one held three inches from the bit, one of the most ravishing four-footed creatures ever animated by the breath of life.

When she was so near us, that we could appreciate her in all her perfection, an exclamation burst from every breast; the most vehement applauded, and the prince, though so completely master of himself (being a diplomat of long standing), could not prevent a slight quiver from playing over the features of a countenance usually so impassive.

"Here is Peach-Blossom," said Ishmael, fixing upon the prince his black and piercing eye.

This poetic name must have come at once to the mind of whoever contemplated the beautiful creature who bore it. Her fine and almost transparent coat, as soft and glossy as satin, was white, and so tinged by the rose-color beneath it, that it had, indeed, the delicate, charming velvety hue of its beautiful namesake. This indeterminate and exquisite tint seemed to invite the touch, while it caressed the eye. Before even having examined the details of form, one was, so to speak, seduced by this magic of color.

All the prince's friends drew near, the better to admire his new conquest, and I followed.

The mare's head was incomparably beautiful—beautiful in lines and in expression. The forehead was wide and square, and its fulness entailed that relative shortness of the lower part of the head which is esteemed so highly in horses of noble race. The brow was slightly concave, and it gave a proud and haughty expression to the nostrils, which palpitated and quivered with singular mobility. The lips seemed thin and even shrunken, by comparison with the upper part of the face ; and it would have taken but a slender hand to imprison her mouth. The wide-opened eye, with its sweeping eyelids, was prominent and brilliant ; it sparkled with intelligence and daring. A delicate black band followed the line of the lashes like a perfect circle, and gave to her look the mildness of a gazelle's. The whole head seemed enlaced by a network of large, full veins, which stood out in bold relief. The long neck, naturally arched, was joined to the body with irreproachable delicacy. The structure of the shoulder seemed a marvel. The high wither and sloping shoulder-blade revealed the suppleness and strength of the levers that give movement, and assured its lightness and its ease and grace. The leg was slender, and the pastern was set at such an angle as to strike all connoisseurs, while the tendons stood out sharply. The breast was full and large ; the flanks short ; the sides long and curved, and the rump very wide. In short, everything in her rounded and compact body seemed made to attain the double perfection to be sought for in a horse—rapidity and strength.

The two little *mouckres*, who had doubtless received their

instructions beforehand, led the mare, step by step, in and out among the groups of spectators to give everyone a chance to see and to admire.

Peach-Blossom, like the good princess she was, let herself be gazed at; but now and then a shudder would pass over her delicate skin, and she would shake herself with little brusque movements which threw her flowing mane over her head, covering it as with a wave of silvery silk. She was not harnessed in the Arabian manner; she had upon her powerful back, which was as straight as any table, only a

little square of red velvet; but she still wore her wide bridle, and upon her breast a green stone engraved with an inscription from the Koran, which was destined to preserve her from the evil eye and all the spells which witchcraft might cast upon her.

Over this amulet hung a little leather bag which contained,

written upon parchment, with the signatures of the witnesses, the pedigree of the mare, worthy of the Prophet.

While Peach-Blossom was making her triumphal promenade the king of the desert was slowly, coldly counting his gold. It took him a long time, for he did everything conscientiously, as behooves a man who does not intend to be deceived.

We, meanwhile, were congratulating the prince; the Turks were lightly passing their hands over the satiny neck of the mare; a few women were sending her kisses.

The *mouckres*, when they had finished leading the horse about, returned to the place where they had stopped at first, at the entrance of the little tent. Ishmael had put the gold in a fold of his dress, and it gave out a ringing sound whenever he moved. Prince Kurieff's groom, to whom his master had given a meaning glance, went up to the mare and was preparing to take her from the hands of the two Arabs.

The sheik, without a word, but with a commanding wave of the hand, came back to his old favorite, whose fine, intelligent face might have made one think that she understood all that was going on about her; he kissed her softly on the eyes, and, showing her the great mass of coins which filled almost to bursting the folds of his *machlah*, making her smell the gold, addressing himself to her as if she could understand, with a voice just touched by increasing emotion, and with a look that grew more and more tender:

"Did you know," he asked, "that you were worth all that?"

Peach-Blossom replied by an almost inaudible whinny, and fixed upon her master a look so tender that women might have envied it.

"Well," he added, "you are worth still more to me, Peach-Blossom, and I shall keep you."

And as he spoke, with a gesture of incomparable dignity—known only to those who live near Nature's heart and, as it were, within her breast, he cast away the gold, which rolled upon the ground, sprang upon the mare's back, and Peach-Blossom disappeared with him in a cloud of dust, flying toward the sands of Palmyra.

BY ELEANOR MAYFIELD*

The mother smiled as she gazed into the clear depths of her babe's dark eyes, and caught the shining of the new-born soul behind them.

"*My boy,*" she murmured rapturously, revelling in the strange, new sense of possession, "thou art indeed a beautiful child; but the soul that looks out from thy dear eyes is more beautiful even than thou. Tell me, O thou human soul, fresh from the sinless shores of Paradise! wilt thou guide my boy aright? Wilt thou be true?"

And the soul in the boy's eyes returned the mother's gaze with a sweet steadfastness. "Trust me," it seemed to say, "I will be true."

And the years went by. The beautiful babe became a winsome boy, who in turn grew to a brave and comely youth, and all too soon the youth was a man.

Meanwhile, how had the soul fulfilled its mission?

Lovingly and tenderly, 'mid the petty trials and vexations of childhood, it guided the boy's steps; and when maturer years brought stronger and more alluring temptations, more constant still grew its gentle ministrations, till it seemed in truth that the boy and the soul were one.

The passing years took the youth from the sheltered harbor of home, out on the stormy sea of life, and often it seemed

* A soul's promise and fulfillment. Written and illustrated for Short Stories.—Copyrighted.

that he must be submerged in its swift-flowing current. Not always did he escape unharmed: some darksome waves of sin there were, which drenched him with their burning spray; but when deep remorse and despair threatened to engulf him, then shone forth the soul's clear leading, and the well-known voice said to him, "Courage! we must turn back, back; we must be true." And the youth listened and was saved, and by and by he grew strong to resist, to endure, to do; till it came to be that in truth, not seeming, he and the soul were one.

And when, along the path of the mother's lonely years, there is a glad meeting, and, clasping her boy in her arms as of old, she looks into the dark eyes, whose pure depths are undimmed by sin, and asks, lovingly and trustfully, "Soul, hast thou led my boy aright? Hast thou been true?" then the soul makes answer, "I have kept my faith; I have been true."

“ REDDY ” *

BY WALTER J. DAVIS

One dusty day in July, 1881, he walked into Pinos Altos, New Mexico, over the trail which leads out to the Upper Mancos country.

He came lamely and very wearily, and his picturesquely ugly face was pale. His attire was conglomerate. He wore a sailor cap of dirty faded blue, a gray German blouse, brown overalls and heavy brogan shoes. His hair was of the most startling scarlet, and very thick, wavy and unmanageable, so that the cap seemed to be shifting position to keep atop of it and fairly rocking upon garnet billows. His eyes were big and blue, and but for the half vacancy of their stare would have been handsome, while an upturned nose of formidable dimensions and homeliness spread nearly to either side of his face.

But in spite of such drawbacks, he wasn't altogether ugly; his lips were actually cherubic, in the childish laxity of their contact and their gentle expression, when he displayed two rows of perfect teeth.

This strange creature, with the weak looking body and legs, and the long arms that appeared strong and as if made for somebody else, accepted the hospitable offer of the card, tacked upon the entrance to “Murphy's saloon and club-room,” which indicated by a pointing finger the big earthen jar beneath, and said unto all and singular who might gaze thereon: “Water; take a drink.”

The wayfarer, as was fully proved afterward, could read only a very little English, so his ready comprehension of the badly penned words on the card may be laid to inspiration born of thirst. There was a deep guttural gurgle of satisfaction at every gulp of the cooling liquid that went down his throat. As he stood fanning his thickly thatched brow with his cap and staring about, John Murphy, with his fat face more intensely purple than ever, and his trousers secured by a belt at what had once been his waist, but which was now the equator of his corporeal rotundity, came out and took a look at his visitor.

* A pathetic story for St. Valentine's Day. Written for Short Stories.—Copyrighted.

“Well, I’ll be—Belle, come here!”

And Belle came.

“Belle, have I got ’em agin, or is that a torch-light procession?”

Murphy was getting the interest on the alcoholic investment made the night before, and could see a long line of red-haired fantastic figures.

“G’won back to yer bunk, yer ole tub er jimjams, while I take keer er this pore ha’f-starved kid!”

That was what Belle said, and Murphy took her advice and shuffled drunkenly away.

“Now, Reddy, you come in here and let me fill yer up, ’cause I don’t think yer’ve had er decent bite fer a week!” That was Belle talking to the oddity who stared as hard at her as he had at Murphy.

“Ae ben——”

“Never mind where yer’ve been,” interrupted Belle; “you come on in and you set down there.” And as she spoke she took Reddy by the shoulder, and with gentle roughness pushed him along past the bar with its rows of decanters of “tangle-foot” and garnishment of dried-up lemons, and thrust him into a chair which stood by a green-topped table that had a slot in the middle of it. “Now you jes wait. Juanna!” she called out.

“*Si, señora!*” came the answer, and a little brown Mexican maid, almost incredibly fragile, but bright and alert, came quickly from a room in the rear.

“Juanna, you got *lumbre* in the kitchen? (that’s fire, Reddy).”

“*Si, señora.*”

“*Bueno*; you go and make some *enchiladas* (that’s cakes, Reddy), and cook six *huevos* (that’s eggs), *y poco café* (that’s coffee, yer know) and sugar, and *leche* (that’s milk fer the coffee, Reddy), an’ *traiga* them ter this kid, quick; *entiendes?*”

“*Si, señora, mi voi de una vez,*” answered Juanna as she sped away.

“She says she’ll git um right away, Reddy,” said Belle.

Reddy’s half-illuminated intellect was receiving new light. He had not seen Juanna when she came in. In fact, he had not taken his eyes off Belle since she brought him there; and

many a man of keener senses would have much enjoyed seeing what Reddy saw.

Belle Dowlan was pretty, besides being the marvel of Pinos Altos and all the surrounding country. Belle was 28 and looked about 23. Black hair, red cheeks, snappy black eyes, a neat little mouth, the corners of which tucked in when she smiled and formed two of the dearest dots of dimples on either cheek.

Oh, Belle was "all right," as Big Bill Forbes always said when he came down to play his "dust," "and if she wasn't such a little devil, when she got cranky, she could run for queen in any country."

But Belle was not half bad, if she was born in Texas, and if she did deal faro and monte with an all too skillful hand. Her husband, who taught her the handling of cards, "went broke" one day, and with some other enterprising chaps stole a few horses and moved over into New Mexico. A few months after that, while Dick Dowlan was dealing a prosperous game of faro, and Belle in another corner of the "clubroom" was doing a rushing "short card" business, a lot of Texas cowboys rode into Pinos Altos, and three minutes thereafter strode into Murphy's. Recognizing an old friend, they took Dick Dowlan out and quietly and unostentatiously hung him. They then rode back to Texas.

Belle had always loved the reckless rascal whose name she had taken, whose frequent wounds she had dressed, and whose unvarying brutality she had patiently borne; and it was a hard blow to her to lose him. But her sorrow dried up quickly under the influence of her hatred of Dan Hawley, a tall grizzled miner who was saving up a great deal of "dust" at Pinos Altos, who had loved Belle always and who had gone away from Texas when the girl married Dowlan. Belle maintained that Hawley could have saved Dick by telling the enraged Texans how the gambler had been led into horse stealing by bad luck and Comanche Bill. But Hawley had refused to try to interfere when Belle begged him on her knees, in the dirt of the road, on the day Dick Dowlan died.

"How wuz them eggs, Reddy?" inquired Belle, when the half famished estray had devoured what Juanna had so plentifully prepared.

The big blue eyes were still staring at her, but somehow there was nothing unpleasant in this boy's fixed gaze. "Ben goot," said he.

"And the '*enchiladas*?'" continued Belle, laughing, "wuz they 'ben goot' too."

Then Reddy laughed his laugh: "Yah, goot; uh, huh—huh?"

Belle would never admit that there was anything that she didn't know all about. She talked "Mexican" that was so largely diluted with ungrammatical English that poor Juanna was often in despair, but did not dare to intimate that she failed to understand. So now she made up her mind that Reddy was "Dutch," which term applied comprehensively to all those who spoke not Mexican or English.

"Now I want yer to tell me all about yerself. I talk Dutch jes as easy as I kin Mexican. Vat yo name is, ge-liebt?"

"Ae not—uh, huh—huh," chuckled Reddy.

"You Dutch—no?"

Reddy was puzzled; the blankness that was in the poor, straining eyes turned toward Belle, seemed to spread from them into his face and even to throw a pallor upon the ruddy furze which overhung his forehead. Then came a flash of intelligence.

"Ae got liddil boke," said he, and thrust his hand into his blouse. He drew out a little square volume, very pudgy and bound in black; this he handed over tenderly to Belle. Inside the cover, written in German-looking text was what was like "Niban Anschl-l-" followed by an infinitude of l's, and farther down the figures "56." The book was an English copy of Æsop's Fables and was much worn.

"Yo name?" continued Belle, trying to inject some foreign inflection into the chopped-up English, as she pointed to what was written.

"Yah," said Reddy, and nodded and started.

"Dog gone the boy! I don' b'l'ever he unnerstan's his own langwich!" muttered Belle. "I'll see;" and she indicated the name again and resumed:

"Yo moder?"

"Yah."

"Yo fader?"

"Yah," and he nodded again and supplemented this action with his gentle grin and "uh, huh—huh."

"'Taint no use, Unk' John," said Belle to her fat father's brother that night, as she and the somewhat sobered Mr. Murphy sat at supper. "The boy, or man, and he's more boy an' anything else, is most a idiot. He couldn' tell nuthin' about hissef, an' he jes looks an' grins an' says, 'Uh, huh—huh.'"

"Well, whutcher goin ter do with 'im?" inquired Unk' John" sleepily.

"I'm goin ter keep 'im here an' let 'im carry out slops an' he'p Juanna, an' maybe, after 'while, he kin set by me an' be lookout fer the game."

"Yes, er fine lookout he 'ud make; w'y gal, them Mexicans an' tunnel men 'ud rob yer blind!"

"Oh, I guess not," said Belle, as she took from her bosom a little ivory-handled "32" revolver. "This here is pooty good acrost the table. Yer ain't fergot the time Bud Lamb tried ter pick up "sleepers" on the Chinyman, hev yer?"

The old man got up, stretched his fat arms toward the ceiling, yawned and started for bed.

"All right; cose you'll keep the idjit, speshully ef yer think I doan want 'im 'round."

"Yes; you bet I'm gointer keep 'im—jes fer whut yer said last, ef fer nuthin else;" and Belle, having finished her supper, went out and called in Reddy, fed him well, and then took him out to the clubroom to see her arrange the faro "lay-out."

The kings and queens pasted on the green board interested Reddy deeply, and many were the little laughs he had as he contemplated the fat legs of the "Jack" and the variegated costumes of the other high court people. But he couldn't count and the other cards had few charms for him. He did get excited over the betting, though, and would raise himself up from his position at Belle's left, and stare harder than ever when his patroness took in a big twenty-dollar gold piece or a tall stack of chips. He could get no clue as to how the game was played, but his eyes were more than half the time on Belle, and when she frowned as some lucky player "called the turn," Reddy frowned too, and looked at the winner in a way that made everybody laugh.

"Whar d'jer git yer hoodoo, Miss Belle?" inquired a scraggy-bearded winze-man from the "Magnolia" mine.

"None 'er yer business, Jim Low; he knows more 'n you do, ef he is half-cracked. Er yer done playin'?"

"Yer got it all, Miss Belle."

"Then why don't yer git up an' make room fer some good player?" and the players laughed and Jim "made room."

It was soon understood that "Miss Belle," as everybody called her, had taken Reddy to keep and look after generally, and the patrons of "Murphy's saloon and clubroom" conducted themselves according to this new condition of things. If they poked a joke at Reddy, they were careful not to do it when she was around; but he was such an innocent, harmless creature that nobody could feel much more than a sort of amused compassion for him. Nobody? Yes; one man actually hated the simple-minded boy-man. Dan Hawley did. He had loved Belle Murphy, and he still loved Belle Dowlan, and never suspected the revengeful fire that burned in the bosom of the dumpy little autocrat who turned his dollars into blue chips, and then won the chips back and placed them in the rack again so smilingly.

But he saw how Reddy worshipped her and followed her about and remained at her side, and how she petted and made much of her foundling. He knew, it was foolish jealousy; knew that Belle felt toward the waif that had wandered to her much as she would have felt toward a pet spaniel; still it angered him to know that such as Reddy could be an object of solicitude to one from whom he had, for years, so longingly sought and been refused one look of kindness, one jot of favor.

Hawley, considering that the spry young widow had either forgiven or forgotten his negligence of her husband's interests in that hour of dreadful need, played frequently at Murphy's just to be near her. His was not a thoroughly bad nature, but his passion for Belle had burnt up many a manly trait, and often made him wish murderous things. Hawley always knew that his interference would have saved Dowlan, but he had so fiercely desired his death that he could not have brought himself to even make the attempt. His conscience was eased by the consideration that Dowlan was in fact a horse-thief, and that all such should die.

Money was money to Belle, and so she nightly added to her bank account from Hawley's pocket. The latter at last discovered that the ten thousand he had on deposit at the First National Bank at Silver City had dwindled to something like six. And it did begin to seem that Belle had somewhat relented toward the tall, square-shouldered Texan with the eyes that glittered from under his heavy brows. She smiled on him frequently as he played, and took his money half regretfully as it seemed to him. Sometimes he would chat with her a minute after the game closed, and then he would walk on air back to his cabin and write another letter to Silver City and draw again on the bank.

He did not try to win now but played with a satisfied recklessness that fairly appalled the day laborers in the big drift, who could only afford to buy white chips at ten cents, and placed them singly and warily.

Hawley had made up his mind that Belle knew that he was giving her his all, and he had already noticed how his action had worked upon her. Now she should see that he would not stop short of the end. He knew her autocratic and erratic ways so well that he believed he had discovered what value she had set upon herself with respect to him.

"She has determined that I shall not have her until I have lost to her every cent of my pile; and she waits to see if I will do it!" said he to himself. "Well, she will see!" His passion had become a craze.

One night early in the new year Reddy and Belle were left alone to close up the saloon. Reddy had put up the shutters and was waiting for Belle to take the "lay out" off the faro table so that he might spread his blankets on it and make his bed. The little woman had been lucky and was a good while counting the cash. Reddy sat down opposite her in the case-keeper's chair, picked up the "cases" and idly fingered the buttons of that abacus of crime. The big pine at the back of the house bent a bare arm down to a rear window, and with clumsy fingers telegraphed upon the pane the news of an approaching storm. Reddy began to twist his head about and move his lips, then—

"Bal!"

"Well, Reddy?" said Belle, slightly startled by the suddenness with which the word was exploded.

The adult child was trying hard to sound a phrase that stuck in his throat. He had learned a good deal in his weak, uncertain way, but not enough to talk much. He depended principally on signs.

Putting one finger to his closed lips and pressing it there a minute, he took it away and blurted out "You kiss?"

"Kiss you? my, you red-headed goslin', whutcher talkin' about? Who'd you ever heer talkin' bout kissin? Or, did yer see somebody kissin?" Reddy nodded his head violently and pointed toward Belle's apartments where Juanna had long been dreaming of her sweetheart.

"Oh, so you've been spyin' on Juanna when she takes Manuel's dinner to 'im up ter the shaft?"

Reddy confessed.

"Well, yer orter be ershamed er yerself. They's sweet-'arts an' has er right ter kiss—but the idy er you wantin' ter kiss me!" and Belle looked at the ungainly, childish Scandinavian, German, Dutchman, or what not, and laughed and shook all over. For the first time Reddy's grin failed him; his big vacant eyes began to look watery, and Belle felt a pang.

"Never mind, Reddy; I'll give yer a kiss fer a val'ntine."

"Val'ntine?" said he, following her pronunciation very carefully.

"Yes; I'll give it to yer when ther. time comes."

Reddy smiled again, laughed his three-syllabled guffaw and then uttered the longest sentence of his life—"En ae gif yu liddle boke." As he said this, he produced, for an instant, his small volume and then thrust it back into his blouse.

Belle, smiling, patted him on the head and went off to bed.

Reddy climbed upon the faro table and pulled his blankets up over him, pondering deeply on what the pleasant word "Val'ntine" might mean.

On the night of February 13, which happened to be last quarter of a lively Saturday, "Murphy's saloon and clubroom" was crowded. The end of the week always brought down most of the miners from their cabins, and upon this occasion an unusually large contingent was present. Cowboys from the plains were there with jingling spurs and ostentatiously displayed revolvers. Vaqueros, tan-colored and black-browed, sat about on their heels in a distant corner and smoked their "cigaritos" and sang the songs of Spain, and the low,

sweet, undulating monotony of sound flowed on and wound about and found a way through that jangle of tongues and rattle of "chips."

Outside, and away from the noise of this infinitesimal cluster of human atoms, the world was a wonder of stillness and stateliness. The light fell down from the stars in silver sprinklings and the insensate rocks and mountains and the listless trees caught it, while glorious intelligences were huddled in a hot room, tensely awaiting the turning of a card.

Around Belle's table the crowd of players was thick. Belle dealt deftly and "paid" and "took" in a quick and tireless fashion that was interesting to all beholders. She looked prettier than common. She had that day been to Silver City and had arrayed herself unusually. Her black hair had a ribbon in it and a real rose, and many who were "broke" nevertheless hovered around the table and looked over each other's shoulders, as much to catch an occasional glimpse of Belle as to watch the play.

Reddy, of course, was at his post at the left of the dainty dealer and watched everything, but mostly Belle. He was very gay in a brand new suit of clothes which Belle had that day brought him.

She had, in view of the absorbing interest Reddy had displayed in the event, bought a lot of funny as well as sentimental valentines and proposed to make the morrow a most interesting day for her over-grown "child." She had that morning showed him the big clock back of the "look-out's" chair and exclaimed to him that when it struck "a whole lot er times," then it would be "Val'ntine" day, "when the birds git married an' people gives little love things to one anuther," and so Reddy was anxiously anticipating midnight and "Val'ntine dae."

It was nearly half-past 11 when Hawley, who had lost heavily the night before, came in and elbowed his way to the front. All fell back to give him a place. He had a wild, excited, but withal an exultant look, when he sat down and bought five hundred dollars worth of "blues." It was more than he had been in the habit of starting with. The small players "cashed in" and stood about to "see the fool bust hisself," as one old prospector put it.

Belle handed out five stacks of the five-dollar chips, and

Hawley began. "I want two hundred and fifty on the jack with a copper, and the rest straight up on the ace," said he.

"It's erbove my limit, you know," said Belle; "but she goes."

Hawley placed the bets, and Belle "made the turn." The ace was the first card to come in sight, and the jack stood in the box.

"Whip-sawed me, didn't you?" shouted Dan. "Well, gimme five more stacks."

Belle smiled and complied, and everybody noticed that the player had only one bill left. It was a hundred.

"Now I want a hundred-dollar stack," said he a few minutes later, when he had lost again. Belle handed it over and took the bill. He bet it all "open" on the queen.

The queen came first, and so was a "copper."

Then Hawley rose, and turned his pockets inside out. He took off his hat and ran his fingers through his hair, and laughed out loudly. Belle smiled, and everybody around began to think that Dan Hawley had gone crazy. Had they known what was in that seething brain they would have thought so still more.

"Will you all kindly stand back a few steps? I have something I wish to say privately to Miss Belle."

"He wants to borry a stake from her," said Jim Low, with a wide wink. Nevertheless, they all stood back—all but Reddy. He never moved.

"Can't you send that brat away a minute, Belle?" said Hawley, leaning forward.

"Not!" said Reddy, with surprising force and quickness, as he hitched his chair closer to Belle.

"G'wan, whutcher goin' ter say? Let Reddy 'lone," said Belle, frowning.

"Well, I'll say it, then," said Hawley in a half-whisper. "You've got it, Bell."

"Got what?"

"All of it; all my money. I knew that was what you meant. I understood. You wanted to know if I loved you enough to let you have everything I had, and I've shown you that I do. I won't say more here; but tell me, dear, when shall I come and talk it over with you?"

He had not watched Belle closely while he spoke so fast and so ardently, or he would have taken warning and have saved himself humiliation.

She stood up straight in front of him, and even tip-toed, in her mingled rage and exultation.

"Never!" she shouted in a tone that brought Reddy to his feet and to her side. "Oh, I've got even with yer at last, Dan Hawley! My poor Dick is revenged now," she went on. "I hev got all your money, en' I'm glad, glad, glad of it! Reddy here shell hev it, and jes do whut he pleases with it—throw it away if he wants ter. Now you git outer here, and stay out!" and she motioned him away and began a wrathful little laugh, in which Reddy and everybody else joined.

But the laughter stopped suddenly.

In his terrible disappointment and humiliation, Dan Hawley stood a few seconds rigidly, with his wild, white face stiff with pain; then—a pistol in his hands went off as it pointed toward Belle. Nothing could have been quicker than that action. Nobody saw him draw, but the revolver was drawn and fired before the bystanders, with a shout that was a loud groan and with thirty six-shooters waving, closed round Hawley and bore him down.

Did I say nothing could be quicker than Hawley's shot? That was wrong, for something was.

Reddy.

He had watched. That seems to have been his life-work, and in it he succeeded well.

Watching, he saw Hawley's maniacal motion, and with a great leap, he got in front of Belle and made one sweep of his long arm toward the weapon. He could not reach it, and the ball crashed into his shrunken chest.

It was a second or two before Belle could tell what had happened; then she saw Reddy lying there, with his red hair getting redder in the blood which flowed from his poor broken body. The scream of vibrant grief she gave started wild echoes in the outer air and wailed along the aisles and walls of the pine woods.

The clock back of the "lookout's" chair began striking 12.

Reddy, with his limp head on Belle's knee, opened his eyes wider than ever, and it seemed that the film had passed

away, and they were beautiful. His pale face, that had been all twisted with pain a second before, somehow relaxed and broke into smiles as the clock gave the last stroke.

"Val'ntine dae!"

He said it almost as plainly as Belle could have said it. All this while he was feebly fumbling in his breast, and now he pressed a small black something against Belle's arm. "Liddil boke," he murmured very feebly, and then used up all his remaining strength to turn his eyes once more straight up at Belle.

And she understood, and bent over him and placed upon his lips the promised "Val'ntine."

"*Pobrecito!*" exclaimed the weeping Juanna.

But Belle sat, bowed down and silent.

ETCHING: SILENCE *

BY BELLE HUNT

In the dead of night in a great city I awakened. Instinct told me it was the hour when mortal sleep should be most sound. The air of the room was chill, and my heart beat faintly, registering the low vitality peculiar to the early dawn. I listened for the wonted noises of the night—the creak of an insecure shutter, the gruesome cry of a cat, the roar and boom of the elevated cars. All was quiet: as still as the grave, as hushed and breathless as a forest in the depths of winter, as voiceless yet eloquent as the cold, blue peaks of mountains in the realms of everlasting snow.

I arose, went to the window, and looked out upon the night. Silence and shadow wrapt the great hive.

Sharp-angled and jagged-roofed the human ant-hills stood, un-telltale guardians of the secrets of their walls. Up against the tintless sky, factory-pipes belched forth their sulphurous breath, which hung in smutty clots in dead mid-air. Black crosses, clean cut and significant, pointed their fingers towards infinitude—wardens on the battlements of a Christianity whose Christians slept and heeded not.

Not a cart-wheel nor a foot-fall upon the stony streets; not the chirp of a sparrow, nor the echo of a wind-breath. The leafless trees stood up, motionless and stiff, as though painted upon a gray canvass. Even the heavens slept; no shifting clouds, nor sailing moon, nor twinkling stars. Just that vast, dull, toneless arch, dividing a silent something from a silent nothing. Only the lights were alive. They gleamed and winked like wakeful, prescient things, keeping with me that awesome death-watch over defenceless humanity.

I shivered in the damp dawn-presage: its clammy dewes clung to my brow and finger-tips.

What had awakened me? Silence.

Dawn came, steely and cold-eyed, from the east; a train came thundering from the north and Noise lifted her dishevelled head from pillows of forgetfulness. I shuddered, caught my breath, and crept back to—sleep.

* A study of night. Written for Short Stories.—Copyrighted.

A VOW*

By A. LANDI

HE poor girl had hastened there to the feet of the Virgin, and with the intense ardor of despair, raising her eyes dimmed with the tears which she took no heed to wipe away, she supplicated in anguish, between sobs: "Save him, miraculous Madonna! save my Beppe!"

She stretched her hands, tightly clasped, toward the image, and cried aloud her great sorrow, as though she would by stress of voice make her entreaties avail.

The place was not a temple, but a mountain path of the coast declivity, where, upon a little knoll there stood a rustic niche, not devoid of gracefulness, with the Madonna of Miracles painted in it. And that virgin was often visited by the devout mountaineers, who knelt before her shrine with a piety that was all faith and hope. There poor Agnese prostrated herself in humble self-abandonment.

"See, Madonna," she said, "you must do the miracle, cure Beppe. I ask it of your great mercy, and you shall ask of me in return whatever you will. I will make you a gift of my beautiful garnet necklace, the dear remembrance of my grandmother! I can promise you never to go down to the town to dance when there shall be a festival! I will come every Saturday to deck you with flowers. I will light your little lamp with the pennies of my savings. Oh, if you would hear me, Madonna!"

And thus the girl continued in her fervor, and did not perceive that behind her, leaning against a tall chestnut tree,

*A story of love and a hasty vow. Translated from the Italian by Elizabeth Cavazza and illustrated for Short Stories.—Copyrighted.

another girl stood watching her with a wicked smile, subtle and ironical, on her beautiful lips. The latter remained a while motionless, then appearing to have made a decision, and assuming a horror-stricken aspect, she approached Agnese.

"I knew that I should find you here, poor girl," she said with kindness, "and you have done well, for only the Madonna now can save Beppe; for the doctor declares there is no longer any hope."

Agnese sprang up impetuously.

"Jesus have mercy! Is he grown still worse? Oh, Lisa, who has told you so?"

"Eh, the doctor himself, who has just come out of the house."

Agnese, without questioning further, turned sharply and set off at a run up the hill. The other, who had not expected this abrupt action, frowned with vexation, and cried in a voice which anger made harsh:

"Agnese, don't do anything foolish now; come here, listen." And she continued insinuatingly: "No doubt Beppe is worse—but there! with standing around him you can't help matters; indeed, now is the time to supplicate the Madonna more than ever, that she may do the miracle. Heed what I say; come, a few minutes, and then you can go back to him."

And the deceitful girl knelt on the steps of the shrine waiting for Agnese to join her.

With the bewilderment of desolate souls that clutch at any thread which may save them, Agnese let herself be convinced. She returned to prostrate herself as before, and hid her face in her hands, breaking into fresh sobs.

"Much help for Beppe, all this crying! Pray instead—do more than pray, for you must promise to the Madonna an offering, a sacrifice—even a vow. Think of it, 'Gnese,"

"Well, dear, what is the vow that you think best to offer? The greater the sacrifice the surer the grace!" continued Lisa in an insinuating tone.

"I don't know! I don't know!" sighed Agnese desolately, "I will cut off my hair that he loves so much!"

"Oh, the poor, simple girl! And you call that a sacrifice? If it were my betrothed in such great peril, I should know how to offer to the Virgin a worthy vow!"

"Speak, Lisa; help me!"

"Offer to her the love that you have for him: make a vow to her, if not that you will not love him, at least, to give him up—to break the promise."

The drooping head of Agnese was lifted quickly, and her

wide eyes were fixed upon those of Lisa, which in that moment appeared darker and sterner than ever.

"He is at the point of death, you know," Lisa continued excitedly. "Come, promise, you will see whether the miracle is not certain!"

She drew the unhappy girl into her arms and, caressing her, went on with persuasions, until poor Agnese, in accents feeble as a sigh, made a vow to the Virgin to renounce her lover if only she would save him.

Beppe recovered. The malady had been of a most violent nature, and the convalescence was slow and painful, so much so that at times he would rather have died than return to health. About his bedside he always saw two persons who took jealously passionate care of him, his mother and Lisa. And while, under the weight of the fever, it was difficult for him to speak, they noticed that now and then his gaze was fixed persistently upon the door, as if he expected some longed-for visitor. When he could express himself, his first words were, "And Agnese?"

"But——" was the answer.

"But what?"

"Yes, have patience, she will come."

He asked again and again, but Agnese never appeared.

In this way Lisa carried on her perverse work, of making the convalescent believe Agnese indifferent to him, with such subtle art, that already she tasted victory. She had succeeded so well in deceiving Agnese that it seemed to her as easy to blind Beppe, having him altogether in her power. From the time that she had understood the very serious condition of the sick man—whom she had for a long while secretly adored, and would have had for her own—she had devised the audacious scheme of profiting by it for

her advantage. It was then that in the timorous and gentle soul of Agnese she instilled a dreadful fear lest Beppe should die.

The day of the vow, while Agnese hastened in despair to the miraculous shrine, Lisa had noted in the young man an improvement which was later confirmed by the doctor. It appeared to her that this was the time for action, and it has been told how she succeeded in forcing Agnese to lay her heart at the Virgin's feet. Not content with this, she terrified the poor girl still more by insinuating to her that if she went near the house of the dear invalid, the beneficent working of the vow might cease. In consequence, it was Lisa who took the place of Agnese beside the pillow of the sick man, and whom he saw always near him, delicately attentive, watchful to anticipate his least wishes.

And Agnese?
The gentle creature, in the candor of her faith, was convinced {
that her heroic abnegation had cured Beppe, her idol, and her upright heart, instead of feeling the rebellion of meaner passions, enjoyed the serene calm which is given

by the fulfilment of a precious duty. That was until she saw Beppe. But one day, on her return home, bent under the weight of newly-mown hay, she in passing by his home ventured a quick glance into the little garden and the house still bright with the last rays of the sun. Heavens! what a stab at her heart! What sudden and keen suffering!

Was it really he whom she had seen leaning on the arm of Lisa, and by her supported with tender care? If in that instant the veil of her faith might have been rent away! But no, more strongly than ever even she recalled the prohibition to go near that house; and the unhappy girl, whose limbs failed beneath her, dragged herself along as best she could. What a tempest in that poor soul! And it was later, amid the lightnings of that tempest, that she came to understand her misfortune. To the first strong terror, to the unexpected shock to all her illusions, succeeded—after the bewilderment—the most absolute prostration. There was left to her only the energy to hide her tortures from her family; but at night she shed all her tears and gave way to all her anguish, and at dawn arose once more to the burdensome toils of the little farm.

In these struggles her spirit, born gentle, was not embittered, but little by little she succeeded in conquering the horror with which Lisa inspired her, and came to feel a sort of pity for the disloyal girl who had cut off her life in its bloom. She smothered the idea of revenge and of justification which at first she meditated; and believing that Beppe, having forgotten her who had forsaken him, loved Lisa, she prayed that he, at least, might be happy, and continued to adore him. Discomfiture, bitterness, tears, she kept all to herself with never a complaint, although they could all be read upon her tired little face and in the dropping of her graceful form.

With lapse of time Beppe was again the handsome, active youth, the strong son of the mountain. His grave illness had left no trace; only his spirit seemed changed. By turns he abandoned himself to a fictitious gayety, or remained gloomy for whole days. If he spoke, his speech was sarcastic or bitter, and it was plain that some torturing thing altered his character, naturally good-humored and jovial. Perhaps he was thinking that Agnese's betrayal of him might conceal another love, and he burned with the desire to know if that was so. But he would not ask the question.

Lisa was radiant. Oh, how well she had deserved the promise which Beppe had made her, to marry her before going to be a soldier! And with what wiles she had ob-

tained it! She had passed nights of anguish at his bedside! She had tortured her brain for the expedients that had succeeded so well! But now, indeed, she was happy! A few months more, and Beppe would be hers! How she looked at Agnese when they met! And what airs of pretension she put on with everybody! To be the bride of such a handsome fellow! Now Lisa was so sure of her triumph that having to devote herself to the preparations for the approaching marriage, she no longer accompanied her betrothed when he went out. While Beppe, free from her jealous watchfulness, allowed himself to be instinctively guided by his longing for a meeting with Agnese, and went where he would be likely to encounter her as if by chance.

However, he told himself, he wanted nothing of Agnese but to reproach her for her faithlessness, because that weighed upon his heart; and afterward he should feel better. So it was that he explained to himself the agitation of his mind while he was in suspense, and he promised to his hurt pride that he would be extremely scornful with his former love.

Agnese surely had changed her ways, for through certain well-known paths she no longer passed. It was not proper for him to go to her house, yet he wished to see her alone and now he saw her only in the midst of a crowd of people on Sundays at church or in the square before it. And truth to tell, Beppe never failed to be there.

One day, however, chance favored him, and they met alone.

But she, poor girl, had not strength to withstand the shock of seeing him again, and bending her knees, sank slowly to the ground. He made a movement as if to support her, but drew back, repenting it, and then continued, jestingly:

"I'm really a bugbear to you, am I not, 'Gnese? And yet, see, you have rendered me a service. Do you know that soon I shall marry Lisa?"

It was not news to Agnese; but those words, spoken by him with such fine irony, lashed her face so as to make it flame up to the hair. A rebellious flash lightened her sad eyes, and raising herself proudly, she was about to reply.

Without heeding, he, who wished to go straight to his purpose, went on:

"See here, since chance has made us meet, satisfy a curi-

osity of mine. Tell me who you have got for a lover? Are you silent? I understand, you do not wish to compromise him. Oh, well, after all, I don't care much! Only if I knew him I would set him upon his guard as to your fidelity!"

Agnese, looking at him eagerly, with her whole soul in her astonished eyes, let him speak without answering, as if she did not comprehend. At that silence, his face burned, he ceased to be ironical, grew angry, and resumed, in harsher tones:

"I'm not jesting any longer, you know. I wish to know the truth; I have a right—tell me who he is." And he seized her brutally by the delicate wrists, so that she with difficulty suppressed a cry of pain.

"No one; I have no love."

"Liar!" And he would have continued, but hearing some one approach whom as yet he did not see, because just beyond where they were the path made a turn, he



suddenly let go the poor girl's wrists, as if about to go on his way. Agnese took advantage of the movement, to turn quickly in the other direction. And the two, that in their secret hearts adored each other more than ever, parted like enemies.

The military levy was made of those born in 1870, and Beppe drew a number that would compel him to become a soldier in a few weeks. When Lisa learned that, she ran in haste to remind him of his promise, and to tell him to dispatch, for she had all her things in order; it was he who had no time to lose about the preparations.

"And I shall not make any," he replied; "for I was just meaning to tell you that I think it would be better to wait with our marriage until I come home, from being a soldier, in three years."

Unlucky speech! Screams, tears, nerves upset, threats, everything, were employed by the disappointed girl to move Beppe; but he remained coldly impassible then and in the days following.

He, instead, was maturing a plan in his mind; and no, he would not go before seeing the effects of it. He had decided to surprise Agnese in company with his rival, and there was no cunning that he did not employ in order to watch her unseen. In this way he soon noticed that Agnese, in order to reach the plain, took the short cut down the mountain side, and there, passing in front of the miraculous shrine, stopped to pray. Many times Beppe hid behind the thick chestnut trees, in expectation of seeing some one join the girl; gradually, however, as his theory was proved to be mistaken, a divine joy invaded his heart, and, while scarcely daring to taste that joy, he already abandoned himself to smiling hopes. One day he found himself so near to Agnese that, by straining his ears, he could catch an invocation of hers to the Virgin, to whom she faithfully prayed.

"Continue your protection to him, Madonna of Grace," she said. "Let my sacrifice avail always to save him from every peril! Now that he is going to be a soldier, bless him more than ever, my poor love!"

She heard in that moment a light rustling of dry leaves, trodden under foot; and, turning in affright, she stifled a cry at seeing Beppe beside her—Beppe, who, with a radiant face, asked her perplexedly:

"For whom do you pray, 'Gnese?" and he looked at her with anxiety. "Who is your love? Who is it that is going for a soldier?"

The poor girl did not reply, but met his eyes with so intense a look of love that he, shaken by a thrill of joy, clasped her in a passionate embrace, and, with her, fell on his knees before the holy image.

"Here, before the Virgin," he told her softly, "I swear to you that I will be yours. And will you swear to me that you will not be another's?"

She, in the blissfulness which took possession of her in that moment, held close in his arms, swore it; but almost at once, terrified at the remembrance of the vow made so little while before at that same altar, exclaimed quickly and in great agitation:

"No, no! God forgive me! I cannot, Beppe! I cannot promise you anything more."

The young man's face flushed.

"Why?" he asked in a hard tone, withdrawing from her, and adding bitterly: "'Tis true then; there is something going on that you wish to hide from me! For a long time I have tortured myself to explain facts that I don't succeed in understanding. Also, around myself I feel the mystery; but now, from here you don't move if you do not explain everything. For you must know, and you shall speak."

He straightened his tall form, crossed his arms, and with a stern face stood before Agnese in a resolute attitude.

Timidly, but not disturbed, the girl answered:

"Look, Beppe; I can swear to love none but you, and not to be another's; but to become your wife—no, 'tis impossible! To this Madonna I have made a vow"—and she went on more softly, "a vow in order to save you when you were about to die."

Beppe remained looking mutely at her, as if he had not clearly understood; then, as though transfigured by joy:

"You have done this? You, holy creature! And you have let yourself be accused, and have rejected happiness?"

"Yes; but I had the reward of seeing you in health again."

"The vow, the vow; tell me—it was——"

"It was to renounce you forever. You can ask Lisa; she made me swear it before this Virgin."

"Lisa? Did you say Lisa?" His exclamation was accompanied by a sense of bewilderment, on account of which he proceeded calmly: "You do not mean to speak of the Lisa that I know, do you? And who is that other that has so persuaded you to leave me while I was almost dying? See, 'Gnese," he resumed with warmth; "this action of yours appeared to me so monstrous that it has made me hate you and curse you with all my soul. But what do I say? I believed that I hated you—rather, I wished to do so—but no; my heart was always yours, notwithstanding

that I believed you greatly in fault. Oh, how I have suffered! How I have suffered! But now——”

He became excited in speaking; it was plain that he would have wished in a single breath to tell her all the sorrows that he had undergone, but he spoke brokenly and in a disconnected manner, because the great joy that had descended into his heart now dominated him.

On the contrary, the mind of Agnese appeared ruled by a thought, which must have been very troublesome to give to her gentle face so disturbed an expression. Beppe perceived it, and, surprised at seeing himself misunderstood, came nearer to the girl, gently took her rough little hands, placed them open upon his broad chest, and holding his own over them, said tenderly:

“Do not you feel as happy as I do, 'Gnese?”

“Yes; but——” She became very red.

“Oh, but these buts must cease between us!”

Agnese suffered; the conscience of the innocent girl was tormented by the doubt lest she herself, in her frankness, had betrayed Lisa, and finding no mode to save her, was silent.

“So that,” continued Beppe, still gently, “who is this accomplice, this wicked Lisa, who made you withdraw from me?”

As she was then, with her hands held against his breast, movement was impossible to the girl; and being no longer able to bear the penetrating look which he fixed upon her, she let fall her head upon that dear support. That simple act, that silence, were a revelation to the young man. He held the girl away from him, almost rudely; and rudely, too, it was that he added:

“Is it possible that 'tis Lisa herself?”

Agnese cast down her eyes and stood awaiting in fear the outbreak of the tempest which she saw gathering upon the brow of her friend.

“She! The wretched girl would have dared so much!” howled Beppe. “Yes, she would play me this clever trick to induce me to marry her! And I, more abject still, to let myself be deceived without understanding anything! That girl doesn't lack cunning! But, I'll catch you. You will see, Lisa, what a marriage this will be!

Infuriated, he shook his fists threateningly, repeating with a frightful accent, "You will see, you will see!"

"Oh, Beppe!" sobbed Agnese, stretching out her hands pleadingly toward him.

"You weep—weep when you ought to be glad?" he answered, calmed by her sweet voice, and went on gently. "Now that everything is explained between us, we may reckon ourselves betrothed as before, nothing divides us any longer."

"No, Beppe, I cannot! There is the vow! Everything is useless; I have sworn it."

"Do you pretend, then, that it is binding, when it was extorted from you by the cunning of that wicked girl?"

"Well, yes, I promised in good faith; and I feel—I know—that I must not fail to keep it," replied the poor girl with painful firmness.

The young man said nothing more, but his countenance altered, and in an agitated silence, he plucked with nervous fingers at his beard, and fixed his gaze upon the ground. A few seconds sufficed for him to decide; he shook himself, came nearer to the girl, and said in great excitement to her:

"Would you save me again, 'Gnese, if you knew me in danger?"

"Yes."

"Well, you do not see it, you do not know it; but I am threatened by a great danger!"

"Heavens! What?"

"That of killing myself if you do not at once make to this Virgin the vow of belonging to me, as you made that of renouncing me."

"You would kill yourself?" she cried, horrified.

"This moment, by throwing myself down there." And with outstretched arm he, gloomy and resolute, indicated the point of the mountain where the abyss opened, and toward which he set forth with decision.

Wild with terror, Agnese gave a shrill cry, ran to him, clasped him with her arms, and dragged him to the shrine. Clinging together, at the feet of the same Virgin that had divided them, the happy pair, with solemn emotion, exchanged vows of eternal fidelity.

A FAIR SMUGGLER*

BY MICHAEL LERMONTOFF

Taman is the most wretched of all our maritime towns. I almost died of hunger there, besides being nearly drowned.

I arrived very late at night in a wretched *telega*. The coachman stopped his tired horses close to a stone building, which stands by itself at the entrance to the town. A Black Sea Cossack, who was on guard, heard the bells of my carriage, and cried out, with the sharp accent of a person suddenly waked up, "Who goes there?"

Out came the sergeant and corporal. I told them I was an officer, travelling by order of the crown, and that I wanted a billet somewhere.

The corporal took us into the town. All the houses we tried were already occupied. The weather was cold; I had been three nights without sleep. I was very tired, and our useless inquiries ended by irritating me.

"My friend," I said to the corporal, "take me to some place where I can at least lie down, no matter where it is."

"I know a hut in the neighborhood," replied the corporal, "where you might sleep; but I am afraid it would scarcely suit your honor."

"Go on," I said, paying no attention to his observation.

After much walking through dirty little streets, we at last reached a sort of cabin on the edge of the sea.

The full moon cast its light on the thatched roof and the white walls of my proposed habitation. In the court, surrounded by a sort of palisade, I saw a hut, older and more broken down than the principal one. From this hut the ground sloped rapidly through the court down towards the sea, and I saw at my feet the foam of the troubled waters. The moon seemed to be contemplating the restless element, which was subject to her influence. By the rays of the ruler of the night I could make out, at a considerable distance from the shore, two ships, whose black sails stood out like spiders' webs against the dull tints of the sky. "This

* A stirring tale of adventure from the Russian. Selected from the Strand Magazine.

will do," I said to myself, "to-morrow morning I shall start for Ghelendchik."

A Cossack of the line was acting as my servant. I told him to take out my trunk and send away the postilion; after which I called the master of the house. I could get no answer. I knocked, but there was still no reply. What could it mean? I knocked again, and at last a boy of about fourteen showed himself.

"Where's the master of the house?"

"There is none," returned the child, in the dialect of Little Russia.

"No master! Then where is the mistress?"

"Gone into the village."

"Who will open the door then?" I cried, at the same time kicking at it.

The door opened of itself, and out came a wave of damp steam.

I struck a match, and saw by its light a blind boy standing motionless before me.

I examined the child's face; but what can one make of a physiognomy without eyes? I looked at him for some time, with a feeling of compassion, when suddenly I saw on his lips a cunning smile, which produced upon me a very disagreeable impression. "Could this blind boy be not so blind as he appeared?" I said to myself. Answering my own question, I said that the boy was evidently suffering from cataract, and that the appearance of cataract cannot be simulated. Why, moreover, should he affect blindness? Yet in spite of my argument, I still remained vaguely suspicious.

"Is the mistress of the cabin your mother?" I said to the boy.

"No."

"Who are you, then?"

"A poor orphan," he replied.

"Has the mistress any children?"

"She has one daughter, who has gone to sea with a Tartar."

"What Tartar?"

"How do I know? A Tartar of the Crimea, a boatman from Kertch."

I went into the hut. Two benches, a table, and a large

wardrobe, placed near the stove, composed the whole of the furniture. No holy image against the wall—bad sign!

The sea-breeze came in through the broken panes of the window. I took a wax candle from my portmanteau, and after lighting it, prepared to install myself. I placed on one side my sabre and my carbine, laid my pistols on the table, stretched myself out on a bench, and, wrapping myself up in my fur-lined coat, lay down.

My Cossack took possession of the other bench. Ten minutes afterwards he was fast asleep; I, however, was still awake, and could not drive from my mind the impression made upon me by the boy, with his two white eyes.

An hour passed. Through the window fell upon the floor the fantastic light of the moon.

Suddenly a shadow was cast where before there had been bright light. I sprang up and went to the window. A human figure passed once more, and then disappeared—heaven knows where. I could scarcely believe that it had escaped by the slope into the sea; yet there was no other issue.

Throwing on my overcoat and taking my sabre, I went out of the cabin and saw the blind boy before me. I concealed myself behind the wall, and he passed on confidently, but with a certain cautiousness. He was carrying something under his arm, and advanced slowly down the slope towards the sea. "This is the hour," I said to myself, "in which speech is restored to the dumb and sight to the blind."

I followed him at some distance, anxious not to lose sight of him.

During this time the moon became covered with clouds, and a black fog rose over the sea. It was just possible to distinguish in the darkness a lantern on the mast of a ship at anchor, close to the shore. The waves were rolling in, and threatened, if he continued to advance, to swallow up my blind adventurer. He was so near the sea, that with another step he would be lost. But this was not the first of his nocturnal expeditions; so, at least, I concluded from the agility with which he now sprang from rock to rock, while the sea poured in beneath his feet. Suddenly he stopped as though he heard some noise, sat down upon a rock, and placed his burden by his side. He was now joined by a

white figure walking along the shore. I had concealed myself behind one of the rocks, and overheard the following conversation:

"The wind," said a woman's voice, "is very violent; Janko will not come."

"Janko!" replied the blind boy, "Janko is not afraid of the wind."

"But the clouds get thicker and thicker."

"In the darkness it is easier to escape the coastguard."

"And what if he gets drowned?"

"You will have no more bright ribbons to wear on Sunday."

As I listened to this colloquy, I remarked that the blind boy, who had spoken to me in the Little Russian dialect, talked quite correctly the true Russian language.

"You see," he continued, clapping his hands, "I was right. Janko fears neither the sea, nor the wind, nor the fog, nor the coastguard. Listen! It is not the breaking of the waves I hear. No, it is the noise of his oars."

The woman got up, and, with an anxious look, tried to pierce the darkness. "You are wrong," she said, "I hear nothing."

I also tried to see whether there was not some sort of craft in the distance, but could distinguish nothing. A moment later, however, a black speck showed itself among the waves, now rising, now falling. At last I could make out the form of a boat dancing on the waters, and rapidly approaching the shore.

The man who was guiding it must have been a bold sailor to cross on such a night an arm of the sea some fourteen miles across, and must have had good reasons for braving so much danger. I watched the frail little craft which was now diving and plunging like a duck through the breakers. It seemed as though she must the next moment be dashed to pieces on the shore, when suddenly the skillful rower turned into a little bay, and there, in comparatively calm water, effected a landing.

The man was of middle height, and wore on his head a cap of black sheepskin. He made a sign with his hand, when the two mysterious persons who had been talking together joined him. Then the three united their forces to drag from the boat a burden which seemed to be so heavy, that I cannot

even now understand how so slight a craft could have supported such a weight. They at last hoisted the cargo on their shoulders, then walked away and soon disappeared.

The best thing for me to do now was to return to my resting-place. But the strange scene I had witnessed had so struck me that I waited impatiently for daybreak.

My Cossack was much surprised when, on waking up, he found me fully dressed. I said nothing to him about my nocturnal excursion. I remained for some little time looking through the window with admiration at the blue sky, studded with little clouds, and the distant shore of the Crimea, stretched along the horizon like a streak of violet, ending in a rock, above which could be seen the lighthouse. Then I went out, and walked to the fort of Chanagora to ask the commandant when I could go to Ghelendchik.

Unfortunately, the commandant could give me no positive answer; the only vessels in port were stationary ones, and trading ships which had not yet taken in their cargo. "Perhaps," he said, "in three or four days a mail packet will come in, and then something can be arranged."

I went back in a very bad humor to my lodging. At the door stood the Cossack, who, coming towards me with rather a scared look, said inquiringly:

"Bad news?"

"Yes." I answered. "Heaven knows when we shall get away from here."

At these words the anxiety of the soldier seemed to increase. He came close to me, and murmured in a low voice:

"This is not a place to stop at. I met just now a Black Sea Cossack of my acquaintance—we were serving in the same detachment last year. When I told him where we had put up, 'Bad place,' he said, 'bad people.' And what do you think of that blind boy? Did anyone ever before see a blind person running about from one place to another; going to the bazaar, bringing in bread and water? Here they seem to think nothing of it."

"Has the mistress of the place come in?"

"This morning, while you were out, an old woman came with her daughter."

"What daughter? Her daughter is away."

"I don't know who it is then. But look, there is the old woman sitting down in the cabin."

I went in. A good fire was shining in the stove, and a breakfast was being prepared which, for such poor people, seemed to me rather a luxurious one. When I spoke to the woman, she told me that she was stone deaf.

It was impossible, then, to talk with her. I turned to the blind boy, and taking him by the ear, said:

"I say, you little wizard, where were you going last night with that parcel under your arm?"

He at once began to moan and cry, and then sobbed out:

"Where was I going last night? I went nowhere. And with a parcel? What parcel?"

The old woman now proved that her ears, when she so desired it, were by no means closed.

"It is not true," she cried. "Why do you tease an unfortunate boy? What do you take him for? What harm has he done you?"

I could stand the noise no longer. So I went out, determined somehow or other to find the solution of this riddle.

Wrapped up in my overcoat, I sat down on a bench before the door. Before me broke the waves of the sea, still agitated by the tempest of the night. Their monotonous noise seemed to resemble the confused murmurs of a town. As I listened I thought of bygone years—of the years I had passed in the north, of our bright, fresh capital; and little by little I became absorbed in my recollections.

About an hour passed, perhaps more. Suddenly the cadences of a singing voice struck my ear. I listened, and heard a strange melody, now slow and sad, now rapid and lively. The sounds seemed to fall from the sky. I looked up, and on the roof of the cabin I saw a young girl, in a straight dress, with dishevelled hair, like a naiad. With one hand placed before her eyes to keep off the rays of the sun, she looked towards the distant horizon and still continued her song.

It seemed to me that this was the woman whose voice I had heard the night before on the sea-shore. I looked again towards the singer, but she had disappeared. A moment after she passed rapidly before me, singing another song, and snapping her fingers. She went to the old woman and

said something to her. The old woman seemed annoyed. The young girl burst into a laugh. Then, with a bound she came close to me, suddenly stopped and looked at me fixedly, as though surprised at seeing me. Then turning away with an air of indifference, she walked quietly towards the shore.

But her manœuvres were not yet at an end. All the rest of the day I saw her at short intervals, always singing and dancing. Strange creature! There was nothing in her physiognomy to denote insanity. On the contrary, her eyes were intelligent and penetrating. They exercised on me a certain magnetic influence, and seemed to expect a question. But whenever I was on the point of speaking she took flight, with a sly smile on her lips.

I had never seen such a woman before. She could scarcely be called beautiful; but I have my own ideas on the subject of beauty. There was a thoroughbred look about her, and with women, as with horses, there is nothing like breed. It can be recognized chiefly in their walk and in the shape of the hands and feet. The nose is also an important feature. In Russia regular noses are more rare than little feet. My siren must have been about eighteen years of age.

What charmed me in her was the extraordinary suppleness of her figure, the singular movements of her head and her long fair hair, hanging down in waves of gold on her neck, and her nose, which was perfectly formed.

In her sidelong glance there was something dark and wild; as there was something fascinating in the pure lines of her nose. The light-hearted singer recalled to me the Mignon of Goethe, that fantastic creature of the German mind. Between these two personages there was indeed a striking resemblance. The same transition from restless agitation to perfect calm; the same enigmatic words and the same songs.

Towards evening I stopped my Undine at the door of the hut, and said to her:

"Tell me, my pretty one, what you were doing to-day on the roof?"

"I was seeing in what direction the wind blew."

"How did that concern you?"

"Whence blows the wind, thence comes happiness."

"And your singing was to bring you good fortune?"

"Where singing is heard there is joy."

"But what should you say if your singing caused unhappiness?"

"If unhappiness arrives it must be borne. And from grief to joy the distance is not great."

"Who taught you these songs?"

"No one; I dream and I sing; those who understand me listen to me, and those who do not listen to me cannot understand me."

"What is your name?"

"Ask those who baptized me."

"And who baptized you?"

"I do not know."

"Ah! you are very mysterious; but I know something about you!" There was no sign of emotion on her face; her lips did not move.

"Last night," I continued, "you were on the sea-shore." Then I told her the scene I had witnessed. I thought this would have caused her to evince some symptom of anxiety, but it had no such effect.

"You assisted at a curious interview," she said to me with a laugh, "but you do not know much, and what you do know you had better keep under lock and key, as you would keep some precious treasure."

"But if," I continued, with a grave and almost menacing air, "I were to relate when I saw the commandant?"

At these words she darted away, singing, and disappeared like a frightened bird. I was wrong in addressing this threat to her. At the moment I did not understand all its gravity.

The night came. I told my Cossack to prepare the tea urn, lighted a wax candle, and sat down at the table, smoking my long pipe. I was drinking my tea when the door opened, and I heard the rustling of a dress. I rose hastily and recognized my siren.

She sat down silently before me, and fixed me with a look which made me tremble; one of those magical looks which had troubled my life in earlier days. She seemed to expect me to speak to her, but some undefinable emotion deprived me of the faculty of speech. Her countenance was as pale as death. In this paleness I thought I could see the agitation of her heart. Her fingers struck mechanically on the

table; her body seemed to shudder; her bosom rose violently and the moment afterwards seemed compressed.

This species of comedy tired me at last, and I was about to bring it to an end, in the most prosaic manner, by offering my fair visitor a cup of tea, when suddenly she rose, and taking my head in her hands, gazed at me with all the appearance of passionate tenderness.

A cloud covered my eyes, and I wished in my turn to kiss her; but she escaped like a snake, murmuring as she did so, "To-night, when everything is quiet, meet me on the shore." Then she disappeared, upsetting as she did so my tea urn and my solitary light.

"She is the very mischief!" cried my Cossack, who had been looking out for his share of the tea.

He then lay down on his bench; and gradually my agitation subsided.

"Listen!" I said to him. "If you hear a pistol shot, hurry down as fast as you can to the shore."

He rubbed his eyes, and replied mechanically, "Yes, sir."

I placed my pistol in my belt, and went out. The siren was waiting for me at the top of the path leading down to the sea, lightly clad in a stuff which clung to her waist like a scarf.

"Follow me," she said, taking me by the hand.

We walked down the rugged path in such a manner that I cannot understand how I failed to break my neck. Then we turned sharply to the right, as the blind boy had done the night before. The moon was not yet up. Two little stars, like the fires of lighthouses, relieved the darkness. The agitated waves lifted and let fall in regular cadence a solitary boat close to the shore.

"Get in," she said. I hesitated, for I confess that I have not the least taste for sentimental excursions on the sea. But it was impossible to refuse. She leapt into the bark, I followed her, and off we went.

"What does all this mean?" I said, getting angry.

"It means," she replied, making me sit down on a bench, and putting her arms round my waist, "It means that I love you."

Her burning cheek was close to mine, and I felt her hot breath on my face. Suddenly I heard something fall

into the water. Instinctively my hand went to my belt. The pistol was no longer there!

A horrible suspicion seized me. The blood rushed to my brain. I looked at her. We were far from the shore and I could not swim. I tried to escape from her embrace, but she clung to me like a cat, and almost succeeded by a sudden jerk in throwing me out of the boat, which was already on one side. I contrived, however, to restore the equilibrium; and then began, between my perfidious companion and myself, a desperate struggle, in which I employed all my strength, while feeling that the abominable creature was overcoming me by her agility.

"What do you mean?" I said to her, squeezing her little hands so tightly that I heard her fingers crack; but whatever pain I may have caused her, she did not utter a word. Her reptile nature could not thus be overcome.

"You saw us," she cried at last. "You want to denounce us." Then, by a rapid and violent effort, she threw me down. Her body and mine were now bending over the side of the frail craft, and her hair was in the water. The moment was a critical one. I got up on my knees, took her with one hand by the hair, with the other by the throat, and when I had at last compelled her to unclutch my clothes, I threw her into the sea."

Twice her head reappeared above the foaming waves. Then I saw her no more.

In the bottom of the boat I found an old oar, with which, after much labor, I succeeded in getting to the shore. As I walked back to the hut by the path leading to the sea, I looked toward the place where, the night before, the blind boy had been awaiting the arrival of the sailor. The moon at this moment was shining in the sky, and I fancied I could discern on the seashore a white figure. Filled with curiosity, I concealed myself behind a sort of promontory, from which I could remark what was going on around me. What was my surprise, and I almost say my joy, when I saw that the white figure was my naiad! She was wringing the water out of her long, fair locks, and her wet dress clung to her body. A boat, which I could just see in the distance, was coming towards us. Out of it sprang the same boatman whom I had seen the night before, with the same Tartar cap. I now saw

that his hair was cut in the Cossack fashion, and that from his girdle hung a large knife.

"Janko," cried the girl, "all is lost!"

Then they began to talk, but in so low a voice I could not hear them.

"Where is the blind boy?" said Janko, at last raising his voice.

"He will be here soon," was the answer.

At that very moment the blind boy appeared, carrying on his back a packet, which he placed in the bark.

"Listen!" said Janko; "keep a good watch here; the things you know are valuable. Tell"—(here a name was uttered which I could not catch)—"that I am no longer in his service. Things have taken a bad turn. He will see me no more. The situation is so dangerous that I must get something to do elsewhere. He will not find such another very easily. You may add that, if he had rewarded more liberally the dangerous services rendered to him, Janko would not have left him in the lurch. If he wants to know where to find me, where the wind howls, where the sea foams—that is where I am at home."

After a moment's silence, Janko went on: "Say she accompanies me. She cannot remain here. Tell the old woman that she has done her time, and that she ought to be satisfied. We shall not see her again."

"And I?" murmured the blind boy.

"I cannot be troubled about you."

The young girl leaped into the boat, and with her hand made a sign to her companion.

"Here," he said to the blind boy, "that will do to buy a gingerbread."

"Nothing more?" replied the child.

"Yes; take this," and a piece of money fell upon the sands.

The blind boy did not pick it up.

Janko took his place in the boat. The blind boy remained sitting down on the seashore, and he seemed to be crying. Poor fellow! his grief afflicted me. Why had fate thrown me in the midst of this peaceful circle of smugglers? As the stone troubles the water, I had brought disorder into these lives, and like the stone, moreover, I had very nearly sunk.

When I got back to the cabin, my Cossack was so fast asleep that it would have been cruel to disturb him. I lighted the candle, and saw that my little box containing my valuables, my sabre with silver mountings, my Circassian dagger (given to me by a friend), had all been carried off. I now understand what the packet placed in the boat by the blind boy must have contained.

I woke up my Cossack with a blow, reproached him for his negligence, and fairly lost my temper. But my anger could not make me find what I had lost.

And how could I complain to the authorities? Should not I have been laughed at if I had told them that I had been robbed by a blind boy, and almost drowned by a young girl?

THE LITTLE GREY MAN

By

ÉDOUARD LABOULAYE

Three or four hundred years ago there lived at Skalholt, in Iceland, an old peasant, who was no more rich in wisdom than in fortune. Whilst at church one day the good man heard a fine sermon on charity. "Give to him that asketh thee," said the preacher, "and it shall be returned unto thee a hundred-fold." The peasant's attention was taken by these constantly-repeated words, which confused still more his already clouded faculties. Hardly had he returned home than he begun to cut down the trees of his garden, to dig up the soil, and to pile up stones and wood as though he were about to build a palace.

"What are you doing there, my poor man?" asked his wife.

"Call me no longer 'my poor man,'" said the peasant, in a solemn voice; "we are rich, my dear wife, or at least we are going to be. In a fortnight's time I am going to give away my cow and——"

"Our cow! our only resource?" cried the wife, "we shall die of hunger."

"Hold your tongue, you silly woman," replied the peasant; "it is easy to see you understand nothing of our pastor's Latin. In giving away our cow, we shall receive a hundred back as a reward. The pastor said so. I shall shelter fifty beasts in the stable I am building, and with the value of fifty others I shall buy pasture enough to feed our

* An amusing bit of Icelandic folk-lore from the French. The illustrations after H. R. Millar.

herd in Summer as in Winter. We shall be richer than the king."

And without heeding either the prayers or reproaches of his wife, our simpleton began to build his stable, to the great astonishment of his neighbors.

This work finished, the good man slipped a cord round the neck of his cow and led it direct to the pastor's house. He found him talking to two strangers, whom he hardly glanced at, so eager was he to make his present and to receive his reward.

The pastor was amazed at such a new species of charity. He gave a lengthy explanation to the foolish fellow to show him that the Bible only spoke of spiritual rewards. It was of no use; the peasant only repeated, "You said so, sir; you said so." Wearied at last of reasoning with such a block-head, the pastor broke forth in holy wrath, and slammed his door in the face of the peasant, who, perfectly astounded, stood rooted to the spot, repeating incessantly, "You said so, you said so." However, he had to return home; no easy matter. It was in Spring; the ice was melting, and the wind swept the snow in great drifts. At every step the man slipped, the cow bellowed, and refused to advance. In an hour's time the peasant had missed the path, and was in fear of losing his life. He stopped in perplexity, knowing no more what to do than the animal which he led. Whilst he stood in doubt a man, laden with a great sack, came up to him and asked him what he was doing in such bad weather with his cow.

When the peasant had told him his grievance, the stranger replied, "My good man, take my advice, and make an exchange with me. I live near here; let me have your cow, which you will never succeed in leading back to your house, and take this sack; it is not very heavy and everything it contains is worth having."

The bargain concluded, the stranger led away the cow. The peasant, hoisting the sack, which he found terribly heavy, on his back, set off on his way home.

In great trepidation at the reproaches and jeers of his wife, he entered the cottage and burst into a long description of the dangers he had incurred, and how, like the clever man he was, he had exchanged a dying cow for a sack full of

treasures. On hearing this fine story, the woman began to show her displeasure; whereupon her husband implored her to restrain her bad temper, and make no delay in putting her largest saucepan on the fire.

Upon which he opened the sack, and behold, out of its depths came a little man all clothed in grey, like a mouse!

"Good-day, good people," he said with all the dignity of a prince. "I hope that, instead of boiling me, you will supply me with something to eat. This little expedition has given me a good appetite."

The peasant fell upon his stool as though he had been thunderstruck.

"There," said his wife, "I was sure of it. Here is a new folly. But what can you expect from a husband? He is certain to do something idiotic! We have lost the cow by which we lived, and now that we have nothing left, you bring us another mouth to feed! I wish you had remained under the snow, sir, you, and your sack, and your treasure?"

The good lady would have gone on talking if the little grey man had not pointed out to her that big words do not fill the pot, and that the wisest thing to do was to sally forth in search of game.

"You will thank me," he said, "when you see what I have brought you."

Saying this, he went out in spite of the wind and snow, and after some time returned with a great sheep.

"There," he said, "kill this animal for me, and do not let us die of hunger."

The old man and his wife glanced at each other across the little man and his prey. This windfall looked remarkably like a theft. Lawful or not, the sheep was devoured with the greatest relish. From that day plenty reigned in the

home of the peasant. Sheep succeeded sheep, and the good man, more credulous than ever, began to think that, after all, he had gained by his bargain since instead of the hundred

cows he expected, Heaven had sent him such an expert purveyor as the little grey man.

One story is good till another is heard. Though the sheep multiplied in the old man's cottage, they diminished visibly in the Royal flock which grazed in the vicinity. The chief shepherd, becoming uneasy, informed the king that for some time, in spite of the increasing vigilance of the watch, the finest animals of the flock disappeared one after the other. Without doubt, some clever thief must have taken up his abode in the neighborhood. Before long it became known that there was a stranger from no one knew where, and whom nobody knew, staying in the peasant's cottage. The king ordered that he should be brought before him. The little grey man set out boldly; but the peasant and his wife began to feel conscience-stricken as they thought of the thieves and accomplices who were hung on the same gibbet.

When the little grey man appeared at court, the king asked him if, by chance, he had heard that five fine sheep had been stolen from the royal flock.

"Yes, your majesty," answered the little man; "I took them for an old man and his wife, who were dying of hunger, whilst you had plenty and to spare. You cannot even spend the tenth part of your revenue, and I thought it only right that these good people should live on what you had no need of, rather than die of starvation.

The king was thunderstruck at such audacity; he eyed the little man with a look that boded nothing good. "It is evident," he said, "that your greatest talent is stealing."

The little man bowed with an air of self-conscious modesty.

"Well, you deserve to be hanged," said the king, "but I pardon you on condition that to-morrow at this time you shall have taken from my herdsman my black bull, which is guarded with the greatest care."

"Your majesty," answered the little grey man, "your condition is impossible. How do you think I can elude such vigilance?"

"Unless you do it," replied the king, "you shall be hanged."

And with a wave of his hand he dismissed our thief, who heard as he passed out, derisive whispers of: "You will be hanged! You will be hanged!"

The little grey man returned to the cottage of the peasant, where he was warmly welcomed by the old man and his wife.

But he said nothing to them, except that he was in need of a rope, and that he was going away the next morning at day-break.

They gave him the old halter of the cow, and then he went to bed and slept peacefully.

At dawn, with the earliest beams of the rising sun, the little grey man went out, taking his cord with him. He strode into the forest by the path usually used by the king's herdsmen, and selecting a big oak in full view, he hung himself by the neck to the largest branch. But he was very careful not to make a slip-knot.

Very soon afterwards two herdsmen passed by, leading the black bull.

"Halloa!" said one of them, "here is our rascal who has got what he deserved. Good-bye, old chap, you won't steal the king's bull now."

As soon as the herdsmen were out of sight the little grey man came down from the tree, and taking a short cut, hung himself once more to a great oak close by the road. Imagine the surprise of the herdsmen, when they caught sight of him again!

"Who is that?" said one. "Are my eyes deceiving me? Here is the little man we saw hanging over yonder!"

"How stupid you are!" said the other. "How can a man be hanged in two places at the same time? It is another thief, that is all."

"I tell you it is the same," replied the first shepherd. "I recognize his coat and his grin."

"I bet you," answered the second, who was of an independent turn of mind, "that it is a different man."

The wager was accepted. The two men fastened the king's bull to a tree and ran back to the first oak. But while they were running the little grey man jumped down from his gibbet, and quietly led the bull to the peasant's house. There was great rejoicing, and the animal was put into the stable until it should be sold.

When the two herdsmen returned to the palace in the evening they hung their heads and looked so dejected that the king saw at once he had been duped. He sent for the little grey man, who appeared with all the serenity of a great mind.

"You have stolen my bull!" said the king.

"Your majesty," replied the little man, "I have only obeyed your orders."

"Very well," said the king, "here are ten gold crowns to pay for my bull; but if within ten days you do not manage to steal the sheets off my bed while I am in it, you shall be hanged."

"Your majesty," said the little man, "pray do not ask me to do any such thing. You are so well guarded that a poor man like me could never even approach the palace."

"Unless you do it," answered the king, "I shall have the pleasure of seeing you hanged."

That night the little grey man, who had returned to the cottage, provided himself with a long rope and a basket. In this basket, lined with moss, he placed a cat and her kittens, and then he went out. Gliding noiselessly through the darkness he reached the palace, and climbed upon the roof without being perceived by anyone. To enter a garret, where with the help of a saw he quickly made a neat opening in the floor, was for our clever little fellow the work of a few moments.

On reaching the king's bedroom, he proceeded to carefully uncover the royal bed, and after placing the cat and her kittens in the centre, he arranged it neatly again, and then by the aid of his rope, climbed upon the canopy, where he sat down to await the result.

The palace clock struck eleven as the king and queen entered their chamber. The light having been extinguished the queen was about to step into bed, when she uttered a shrill scream and ran to the further end of the room.

"What is the matter? Are you mad?" said the king. "You will rouse the whole palace."

"Do not get into bed," answered the queen; "my foot touched something warm and soft."

"Why not say at once that there is a hobgoblin in the bed?" replied the king, laughing contemptuously. "All women are as timid as hares, and as senseless."

Upon which, like a true hero, he bravely entered the bed, but as quickly jumped out again, howling frantically and dragging with him the cat, whose claws were firmly embedded in the calf of his leg.

At the cries of the king, the sentinel hastened to the door and knocking three times with his halbert, inquired if assistance was needed.

"Silence!" shouted the king, ashamed of his weakness, and not wishing to make an exhibition of himself.

He struck the tinder-box, relit the lamp, and on going towards the bed, discovered in the middle the cat, who had returned to her place and was quietly licking the kittens.

"This is too bad!" he exclaimed; "the impudent animal has no regard for our crown, and has chosen our royal bed as a snug corner for her kittens. Wait a moment, little wretch; I will soon give you your reward!"

"She will bite you," cried the queen; "she may be mad."

"There is nothing to be alarmed at, my dear," said the good king. He then took the sheets by the four corners, and tying them together with cat and kittens inside, he rolled all together in the blanket and counterpane, and threw the enormous bundle out of the window.

"Now we will go into the next room," he said to the queen, "and since we have had our revenge, we may hope to sleep in peace."

The king slept, and we may imagine pleasant dreams refreshed his slumbers; but while he slept a little man climbed upon the roof, and, with the aid of a rope, slipped quickly down into the court-yard. He began to search for some invisible object, which, having found, he hoisted on his back, and was soon after hastening along the snow-covered road. The sentinels thought they had seen some phantom, and wondered what those cries they had heard, like those of a new-born infant, could mean.

When the king awoke the next morning he began to think over the events of the previous night. A dim suspicion dawned upon his mind that he had been the victim of a joke, and that its author was probably the little grey man. He sent for him immediately. The little man arrived, carrying on his shoulders the sheets neatly folded, and falling with bended knees before the queen, he said humbly:

"Your majesty is aware that I have only carried out the king's orders; I hope your majesty will be gracious enough to pardon me."

"I pardon you," replied the queen, "on condition that we see you no more, or else I shall die of fright with your tricks."

"But I do not pardon you," said the king, very much annoyed that the queen should have taken upon herself to act without consulting her lord and master. Look here, you rogue, you shall be hanged to-morrow night, unless you have managed before then to steal the queen herself!"

"Your majesty," cried the little man, "let me be hanged at once, for you would spare me twenty-four hours of anxiety. How could I attempt such a thing? It would be easier to steal the moon."

"That is your business, not mine," replied the king. "In the meantime, the gallows shall be prepared."

The little man left the court in despair, burying his head in his hands, and sobbing pitifully; the king laughed joyfully.

In the dusk of evening a holy monk, carrying a rosary in his hand and a bag under his arm, came to the palace to beg as usual for his convent. When the queen had given him her contribution, "Madam," said the monk, "heaven will reward so much charity. I bring with me even now its recompense. To-morrow, as you are aware, a poor fellow, whose guilt is undoubtedly great, is to be hanged within the palace."

"Alas!" answered the queen. "I pardon him willingly. I would gladly have saved his life."

"That cannot be," said the monk; "but this man, who is half a wizard, can make you a valuable present before he dies."

I know that he possesses three wonderful secrets, of which one alone is worth a kingdom. He can bequeath one of these secrets to any woman who has had compassion on him."

"What are these secrets?" inquired the queen.

"With the knowledge of the first, a wife is able to make her husband do everything she wishes," replied the monk.

"Oh!" said the queen, with a pout, "there is nothing very wonderful in that. Ever since the time of Eve that mystery has been known from generation to generation. What is the second secret?"

"The second imparts wisdom and goodness."

"Well," said the queen, yawning, "and what is the third?"

"The third," said the monk, "endows the woman who possesses it with matchless beauty, and with the gift of everlasting youth."

"Reverend father," cried the queen eagerly, "I should dearly like to know that secret."

"Nothing is easier," said the monk. "The only thing you have to do is to allow the sorcerer, before he dies and while he is still at liberty, to hold both your hands in his and to breathe upon your hand three times."

"Let him come," said the queen; "fetch him at once, reverend father."

"That is impossible," replied the monk. "The king has given strict orders that this man shall not be allowed to enter the palace. It would mean instant death to him to step within these walls. Do not begrudge him the few hours that still remain."

"Unfortunately, reverend father, the king has forbidden me to go out until to-morrow night."

"That is a pity," said the monk. "I see you must give up this wonderful gift. Nevertheless, it would be delightful to remain young, beautiful, and especially to be loved forever."

"Alas, my father, you are right; the king's order is extremely unjust. But if I attempted to go out, the sentinels would stop me. You look astonished; that is the way the king treats me occasionally. I am a most miserable wife."

"My heart aches for you, poor woman!" said the monk. "What tyranny! But, madam, you should not yield to such unreasonable demands; your duty is to do as you please."

"But how?" asked the queen.

"There is a way, if you are willing. Get into this sack. I will undertake to carry you out of the palace, even at the risk of my life. And fifty years hence, when you are still as beautiful and as youthful looking as to-day, you will rejoice that you defied your tyrant."

"I agree," said the queen; "but are you quite sure that this is no hoax?"

"Madam," said the holy man, raising his arms and beating his breast, "as surely as I am a monk, you have nothing to fear on that score. Besides, I shall remain with you during your interview with this fellow."

"And you will bring me back to the palace?"

"I give you my word of honor, I will."

"Knowing the secret," added the queen.

"Yes, knowing the secret. But since your majesty hesitates, we will drop the question; the secret may die with him who discovered it, unless he prefers to tell it to some woman who has more confidence in him."

The only response the queen made to this was to jump bravely into the bag; the monk drew the cord, lifted the burden on his shoulders, and crossed the courtyard with measured steps. On his way he met the king, who was making his round of inspection.

"You have a good collection, I see," said the king.

"Sire," replied the monk, "your charity is inexhaustible; I fear I have imposed upon it. Perhaps I should do well to leave

this sack and its contents here."

"No, no," said the king. "Take it all, reverend father; it is a good riddance. I do not suppose what you have in it is worth much. Your feast will not be a sumptuous one."

"May your majesty sup with as good an appetite!" replied

the monk in a fatherly tone, as he disappeared muttering something inaudibly. It was probably a Latin prayer.

The supper-bell rang; the king entered the room rubbing his hands. He felt pleased with himself, and the prospect of having revenge gave him a good appetite.

"Is the queen not down yet?" he asked impatiently. "It does not surprise me, though; women are never punctual."

He was about to take his seat, when three soldiers threw open the door, and pushed into the room the little grey man.

"Sire," said one of the guards, "this rascal has had the audacity to enter the palace yard, in spite of the royal order. We should have hanged him at once rather than disturb your majesty at supper, but he pretends that he has a message from the queen, and that he is the bearer of a state secret."

"From the queen!" exclaimed the king, aghast. "Where is she? Wretch! what have you done with her?"

"I have stolen her!" quietly replied the little man.

"How did you do that?" said the king.

"Sire, who was the monk with a large sack on his back, to whom your majesty condescended to say, 'Take it all, and a good riddance'?"

"It was you," cried the king; "consequently, even I am no longer in safety. One of these days you will steal me, and my kingdom into the bargain."

"Sire, I have come to ask you one thing more."

"I am afraid of you," said the king. "Who are you? A sorcerer, or the Devil himself?"

"Neither, sire. I am simply Prince Holar. I was on the way to ask you for the hand of your daughter, when I was overtaken by the storm and obliged to take refuge with my equerry in the house of the pastor of Skalholt. But chance threw in my way a foolish peasant, who has been the cause of my acting in this manner. However, I have only obeyed your majesty's orders in all this."

"Well, well," said the king, "I see—or rather I do not see; it matters little. Prince Holar, I would rather have you as a son-in-law than as a neighbor. As soon as the queen comes back——"

"She is here, sire; my equerry has conducted her back to the palace."

The queen soon reappeared, rather ashamed of having

been so easily duped, but readily comforted at the prospect of having such a clever man for her son-in-law.

"You must tell me the wonderful secret," she whispered to Prince Holar. "I wish to know it."

"The secret of being beautiful for ever is to be loved," said the prince.

"How can one be always loved!" asked the Queen.

"By being good and simple, and by pleasing one's husband."

"Is that all? And you pretend to be a sorcerer!" exclaimed the indignant queen, throwing up her arms.

"Enough of all this mystery," said the king in alarm. "Prince Holar, you will have plenty of time to chat with your mother-in-law when you become our son. Come, supper is getting cold. Let us have the whole evening to enjoy ourselves; make the best of your time, my boy, to-morrow you will be married."

Having made this remark, which he thought rather witty, the king glanced at the queen, but he received such a look in return that he immediately stroked his chin and contemplated the flies on the ceiling.

Here ends the adventures of Prince Holar. Happy days have no history. We only know that he succeeded his father-in-law and became a powerful ruler. Being something of a liar as well as a thief, bold yet artful, he had all the qualities needful for a conqueror. He took more than a thousand acres of land, which he lost and re-conquered three times, in doing which he sacrificed six armies. In the celebrated annals of Skalholt and Holar his name figures gloriously. We refer our readers to these famous and most interesting records.

BY MRS. EDMUND NASH MORGAN

For hours the bells of Florence, which had so often rung out to proclaim calamity to the beautiful city, had been sending forth, on Christmas eve, their greetings of good will. The mingled voices of their chimes were dying on the midnight air, while the echoes were borne from San Marco, far off over the hills to San Miniato and Fiesole, till city and country seemed alive with the rhythmical music.

The grand notes of the organ in the Duomo, joining the dying tones of the bells, fell with wondrous joy on the heart of a lad who knelt silently on the threshold of the cathedral and drank in the glory of the music.

Of religion he knew and thought little, but the sweet sounds filled his soul with rapture. He loved the deep tones of the great bells, loved while not understanding the beauty of the organ notes.

This ignorant child knelt with bowed head and smiling lips, then, slowly rising, reluctantly left the church and wended his way homeward across the deeply shadowed Piazza Signoria.

His heart was full, and as he went he sang again, soft and low, the strains of the Christmas anthem.

He was only a soft-eyed child of the sunny south, but like all his people, full of a love of music and all things beautiful. Alone in this lovely city he earned his daily *polenta* with his sweet voice and old mandolin, by singing under palace windows or in cafés.

Home he had none, save a bundle of rags under some

*The author of this interesting tale of two Italian waifs has been awarded the prize for the best story of child life. Written and illustrated for Short Stories.—Copyrighted

archway, and one night was passed here and another elsewhere, with sometimes not even the rags to rest upon.

As he could recall no other life, his heart was light and his song merry as he loitered under the shadows of the Palazzo Vecchio. Little cared he for the scenes of long ago, and no enthusiasm stirred his soul as he trod the stones where Savonarola died. Naught to him were the quarrels of Guelf and Ghibelline, and the misery of Beatrice over the loss of her murdered lover troubled him not a whit; while the artists and their lives touched him only as he gazed on their handiwork and found it good.

Ignorant as he was, he saw the grace and beauty of the fountains and picturesque Loggia with its wealth of sculptured art, and loved them next to the music of the organ and the chiming of the bells. They were all his friends, and often he slept under the kindly shelter of some world-renowned statue.

Florence was full of strangers and he had had a very lucky day, and a larger share than usual of *polenta* had been given him by the kind vender at the corner; then, too, he remembered a generous pile of rags, well sheltered from the cold winds, where he could sleep when his eyes grew heavy.

A low cry broke in on his song as he neared the Loggia. Following the sound, he found crouching in the farthest corner a child, a tiny girl, sobbing with terror and grief.

He knew little of tears, this sunny natured boy, but his tender heart was touched, and, gathering the wee creature into his arms, Giuseppe tried to soothe her sorrow and fear.

Between sobs she told her pitiful story. A drunken, cruel father, dying by the hand of a miserable, cowardly companion; the child driven forth into the streets, hungry and frightened, running she knew not where; at last, half dead with fear and cold, hiding herself in the darkest spot that she could find.

Giuseppe, poor, often hungry, homeless, a waif himself, took into his big boy's heart this heaven-sent comrade, never doubting that the angels had sent her to him; those beautiful angels over the altar of the cathedral, before which he knelt in admiration as he listened to the wonderful music. They had pitied his loneliness and sent him this lovely child to be his sister, to love him and to be loved.

He led her to his home beneath the arch, and piling the rags as comfortably as possible, sang her to sleep. Giuseppe watched all night by her side, his young brain busy with

plans for her comfort and happiness; and when the morning came, very tenderly he touched the loose curls on the brown forehead, and with gentle voice woke the sleeping child.

"*Nona mia*, I must leave you for a little, but I will come back soon with a bit of breakfast for you."

The idea of being alone filled the little creature with terror and she begged to go with him.

"Oh, dear, dear Giuseppe, take me with you. I'll be so very, very good, no trouble at all. I'll walk so fast and sit so still while you sing your pretty songs!"

"Come, then, *bambina mia*, you shall always go with me if you wish, and I'll teach you all my sweetest songs. Only you must tell Giuseppe when your little feet are tired, then we will rest in the great churches and hear the beautiful music."

So the boy adopted the child and worked for her, singing the sweeter to earn a double share of *polenta* and an occasional *dolci*.

In the mornings they went to the Café Gilli in the Calzaioli, where the officers drank their daily cup of coffee; and here often the soldiers shared their breakfast with them—a bit of

macaroni, a sip of chianti from the gaily braided fiasco—a royal feast to these little waifs.

Soon Nona became a great pet with all, and as she learned to sing Giuseppe's songs the cheers and bravos encouraged her, until the little one grew brave enough to sing for the beautifully dressed ladies in the gayer, more elegant cafés of the Tornabuoni.

Here at 5 o'clock Giuseppe strummed his mandolin, while Nona sang the sweet street songs of fair Italy.

The bright eyes of the handsome boy and tiny outstretched hand of the child met with gracious sympathy from the frequenter of Giacosa's. Everyone grew to know these two lone children in their picturesque tatters.

Giuseppe no longer thought the old archway, swarming with rough street-gamins, a fit place for his precious Nona to sleep in, so a friendly staircase or

a carelessly left-open loggia was found where he tenderly guarded her slumbers.

They ate their daily mid-day meal sitting at the foot of some celebrated statue, or on the steps of a grand historical palazzo; ignorant,

always happy, always contented, thinking themselves well favored when they had a more than usually warm corner to sleep in and something to eat, asking of life no greater luxuries or joys.

When the days grew warmer they strolled on Sundays along the Arno, basking in the sunlight, or sitting under the trees in the Cascine, watching the gay carriages and happy people.

The boy in his torn brown trousers, blue cotton shirt, and big ragged hat, with his mandolin swung by a gay cord on his shoulder; the girl, red-skirted, barefooted, a bright yel-



low kerchief wound negligently around her head, made many an artist turn to gaze, and afterwards strive to put on canvas these two picturesque waifs.

Giuseppe sought other work, for he loved to buy bits of gay ribbon or a string of bright beads to tie around Nona's pretty throat, and the happy light in her eyes more than thanked him for his gift.

He was quick and willing and easily found occupation in sweeping rooms, carrying notes, and cleaning crossings.

At these times, when Nona could not accompany him, he left her within the sacred shelter of the nearest church to await his return.

With the Summer came a still happier life for them, as they roamed in the outskirts of the city, among the flowers and sweet-smelling berries. Starting early in the morning, and breakfasting at some peasant's hut on goat's milk and fresh bread, kindly given them with pleasant words and generous hospitality, they returned in time to sell their gathered flowers in the Mercato Vecchio.

A wonderful instinct of ways and means to earn their daily food seemed to have sprung up in the brave lad with their needs, and no labor was too hard, no task too great to undertake, that he might gain a few sous.

He no longer loitered in the piazzas, nor stopped to gamble with the boys around the Loggia dei Lanza; he even scarce had a moment to spare to his beloved Duomo, with its deep-toned bell and wondrous pictures. He must work that Nona might be fed and clothed.

At midsummer, however, when the cafés were almost empty, and the Cascine quite deserted, their stock of money ran low, and often they went to bed hungry. Nona drooped, and each day the brown eyes grew bigger, the baby face whiter and thinner, until at last the poor child could no longer tramp about with Giuseppe, but stopped in their temporary home all day, while the poor lad, heavy-hearted,

worked and sang, running back often to see Nona and ever caring tenderly for her.

The days grew hotter, the air more sultry and oppressive, and at last poor Nona lay moaning, unable to rise, her feverish little body racked with pain.

Giuseppe was helpless and wild with grief over his poor Nona's misery. At last, frightened and desperate, he sought an aged priest, Father Frascati, who once had befriended him when a group of drunken soldiers had knocked him down. He found the padre at prayers in San Maria Novella, ready to help and comfort all who came to him. Poor himself, he had always a kindly feeling for the needy and unfortunate.

Father Frascati listened to the boy's story and went with him to the miserable hut where poor Nona lay. It was a disused military shed long since abandoned, but deemed by Giuseppe a better place for a home than their old resorts.

Poor Giuseppe was almost frantic when told that Nona must be taken from him. The gentle words of the priest failed to make him understand the good intended towards the suffering girl. One idea alone filled his mind.

He was about to lose Nona, his dear Nona.

Sobbing and pleading he threw himself beside the sick girl, clasping her closely in his arms and defying them to take her from him.

Waiting patiently till the boy's grief had spent itself, the kind priest promised him a sight of Nona soon, assuring him that she would die if left uncared for.

At last worn out, seeing resistance was useless, Giuseppe yielded and followed with unsteady steps the solemn cortège as the *misericordia* bore the moaning child to the kindly shelter of the hospital.

When the heavy doors closed they seemed to have shut out all hope and joy forever from the heart of the poor boy, and throwing himself on the steps he wept himself to sleep.

Night after night he slept on these stones waiting for the first who came out to bring him tidings of his dear one. At last, one quiet Sunday morning, as he lay wretched and alone before the great doors, the good padre came to lead him to his Nona.

Gently, with beating heart and streaming eyes, he followed the priest through long corridors, past clean white beds, until he reached Nona's little cot. He found her very weak and white, her great eyes shining with love and joy over their reunion. What happiness was theirs! How Giuseppe kissed the hands of their good friend, the aged priest!

The boy was very gentle, very tender, very patient, going and coming as they bade him. Twice a week he could come for a few minutes to lay flowers in her hands, to tell her of his longing for her, his joy over her recovery.

He had steady work now, and all day with light heart ent about his tasks, winning a warm spot in the hearts of all about him.

Nona was to stay with the good sisters until strength came back to her, and then a home would be found where she would be trained to some useful occupation.

The winter passed, and Giuseppe's heart grew sad as he remembered how Nona had drooped in the heat of the year before; then, too, the sisters kept her busy, and she seemed not quite his own. Once a month only he was allowed to call for her, to take her for a stroll along the Arno or to watch the people in the Cascine.

Giuseppe had always looked with longing eyes at the country far away over the mountains, but it seemed beyond his reach. Now he felt that the green trees and fresh air would make Nona strong again, and that there she would belong wholly to him. Day and night he thought and planned, saving his money, eating as little as possible, working early and late, that he might save enough to begin their journey.

One day, instead of leading Nona to the banks of the Arno

as usual, he walked on through the heart of lovely Florence, under the triumphal arch of San Galeo, past the custom house offices at the Porte Care, up the Lucca mountain toward Fiesole.

Nona followed Giuseppe trustingly, just as she would have done had he led her into the waters of the Arno or to any other certain death. His will was her law, in her eyes he could do no wrong. As they went he told of his plan to find a home for them in the beautiful green land beyond the purple and gray mountains.

The summer twilight was casting long shadows over the hard white road as they reached the church of San Domenico, the bells sharply calling laborer and peasant to prayers. Reverently the two homeless waifs entered and knelt for a moment, then sought the friendly shelter of the church porch to rest and eat their supper. Here, lulled to sleep by the voices of the bells, they passed their first night in the country, to be awakened by a ruddy-faced priest in a rusty robe, who, blessing them, passed on into the church.

The delicious perfume of the flowers and trees gave them new life and vigor, and they started forth with gay hearts and merry song.

Every step took them farther from the scorching heat of the city, took them nearer that beautiful green land which they sought.

The mountains grew steeper, the road rougher, but they bravely plodded on. The peasants, bowed down with their loads of fagots, gave them a friendly nod; the tourists threw their sous from their comfortable carriages; even the whining beggars forgot their moans and groans as the sunny-faced children passed them.

That night they reached Fiesole, where in the little park, under the dark cypress-trees, they slept. Here they tarried all day, too tired to walk, their supply of polenta exhausted. Giuseppe begged or sang for a bite for them, hoarding his little sum of money for later days on, when their need of it might be greater.

In the morning when they awoke a forlorn little dog was lying by Nona's side, a yellow Pomeranian puppy, unwashed and uncombed, his round eyes begging for love and attention, and trying in his dog-fashion to gain their sympathy by

nestling close to the girl's side and licking her hands and face. When they started up the mountain he followed close at their heels. With childish glee they welcomed him as a fellow-traveler, and divided their scanty dinner in three parts, calling him *fratello piccolo*, little brother.

Far up the mountain beyond Fiesole lived a rich old man, alone with his books and great dogs. There from his high-walled garden he could look down upon his beloved Florence, guarded by her towers and bridges. There he could dream at peace of the days of her superb glory.

He was a student, an artist, a dreamer, living in his palace where every room spoke of the wild revels of the days of Boccaccio, of country dames in brocade and powder, of gallant cavaliers ready to fight and die for the favor of a smile from these fair women.

And thither to
this good man's
door came Giuseppe bearing in
his arms Nona,
wearied and almost ill. The
great dogs added their welcome to the
kind tones of
the master as he
bade them enter
and rest.

It was a lucky star which had directed their course to the gates of Villa Coronna.

The big soft-eyed boy, with his lute voice and winning smile, holding tenderly to his heart the child clad in the red and yellow rags, touched the artist's nature in the old man, while the boy's old-time bravery drew forth all his noble admiration.

He was alone and free to do as he pleased. The children's story appealed to him, and he took them into his heart and home, ever after loving them fondly, and caring for them faithfully.

That night, for the first time, Giuseppe and Nona slept on

wonderful soft beds and ate from priceless china, grander and handsomer than any their eyes had ever beheld, even in the beautiful shop windows; and the old halls, gloomy and silent, echoed with childish chatter and merry footsteps. They were only two little street gamins, fearless and joyous, accepting all things with a gratitude pretty to behold, and friends at once with the grave signor and the stately old servants. Nothing awed them, everything delighted them; and soon they forgot their days of hunger and weary trappings.

For a time the big good-natured dogs were a little jealous of this division of favor, but they too yielded at last, forgetting their grievances in the happy play hours. They even adopted the Pomeranian puppy, not quite liking his appearance at first, but his meek submission to their rough advances gained their liking and they treated him with a kindly contempt.

No one had ever sought for the children, no one had cared whether they lived or died; so they stayed on with Signor Mason, cheering his old home and awakening tender love in his lonely heart.

He loved best the hours when, after dinner, Giuseppe brought his mandolin and sang to him under the ilex and cypress trees; the moon casting fantastic shadows over the white walks, the water of the fountains falling faintly on the terrace below them. Nona, nestling in his arms, sometimes joined in the songs, but oftener fell asleep long before the music ceased.

Giuseppe studied hard, riding into Florence each day for lessons with a great maestro, who saw in the boy's future triumphs his own successes repeated; and so labored, with heart and soul, hour after hour, to train the lad to sing other songs than those of the people—songs which would hereafter win him fame and honor out in the great world. The boy was fast growing into a tall graceful youth, with the caressing voice and winning manner of his race. Nona was still the idol of his heart, his pride, although to Signor Mason he gave a grateful devotion, a tender reverence, faithfully doing his best to win the old man's words of approval.

Whilst Giuseppe studied, Nona was not idle. She learned her lessons at the knee of her dear adopted father, the curls of golden brown mingling with the silver tresses of the kind

signor as he taught her the things he loved best, and watched with loving interest the childish lips as they learned to lisp the difficult English words.

Nona still wore her picturesque reds and yellows, for Signor Mason was too much of an artist to array this quaint southern girl in the fashionable garb of the day; only now the coarse cottons had given place to soft silks, the gaudy beads to necklaces of rare Egyptian work, and the girl looked like an oriental picture framed in a setting of carved oak and ancient tapestries—a bit out of an artist's dream—as she sat in the garden with the acacia blossoms falling around her, the moonlight shining through the dark waving trees upon her net of gold studded with pearls and turquoises. A lithe, graceful creature, dainty and sweet, born to be loved and caressed, too frail to endure life's hardships and sorrows.

At twilight, hand and hand she and Signor Mason wandered down the mountain road to meet and welcome home their dear boy, listening with pride and joy to his story of his day's doings, to the praises of the old maestro, and entering with heart and soul into his dreams of the future. He was their world—something better, cleverer than any one else on earth.

One evening they walked on farther and farther down the mountain, and yet no sign of Giuseppe. On and on they went, their hearts growing a little anxious, each striving to hide the increasing fear from the other. The night came on, and yet he came not.

When the morning broke, Signor Mason, no longer able to endure the suspense, made ready to go into Florence. Nona pleaded to go with him, but, for the first time in his life, he was deaf to her sweet voice, not daring to take her, fearing, as he did, the worst. His foreboding was realized, for half-way to the city he met a messenger speeding to announce the

sad fate of the cherished youth. Giuseppe was dead—drowned in the waters of the Arno.

The day before had been a fête day, the Queen Margherite's birthday, always celebrated with pomp and much merry-making. Unusual crowds had gathered along the bank of the river to watch the regiments pass, and the streets and bridges were filled with people. Presently, crashing in among them, came a pair of frightened and runaway horses. Horrified and panic-stricken, the people crushed and pushed against the stone wall at the corner of the bridge. The stones, already weakened, gave way, and hundreds were hurled into the river and dragged under *Ponta Trinita* to instant death.

Giuseppe, who had stopped for a moment on his homeward way to look at the soldiers, was unhappily among the number dashed into the waters.

The grief of the two mourners was deep but silent. From the hour when Signor Mason had told the terrible news, as gently as a tender mother to Nona, until they gazed on their beloved's face, no word had been spoken.

Nona crept close into the old man's arms, and lay all day long, her fresh young cheek pressed fondly against the wrinkled face of her only friend.

She had made no outcry; only the sunshine and life had died out of the pretty face, and into the brown eyes had come the look of one stricken by death.

The heart of the girl was broken. Try as she would to help the aged mourner bear his sorrow, it was useless. She had no strength to battle with her misery. Day after day she faded, and long before the violets and lilies had ceased blooming she folded her hands and rested beside her dearest and best.

Villa Corona stands on the purple mountain side, forlorn and deserted, save for a few tourists who find their way there, drawn by the fame of its wonders. They are shown treasures gathered from all countries, tapestries worth their weight in gold, statues and paintings which would fill with envy every connoisseur's heart. These wanderers walk about the solemn old garden, sit under the dark trees, lean on the fountains, and draw mental pictures of those who might have lived and died in this grim old palazzo. They let their fancy

run riot over the two small graves, united by a band of richly carved brass, bearing the names of "Giuseppe" and "Nona."

The cicerone, who conducts them about, knows nothing of the history of those two young lives. He relates, however, with tragic tone the story of a bent and sorrowing



old man who comes once a year and covers these two graves with Italy's choicest flowers. This year he is later than usual. Perhaps he is dead, and may never come again.

And these two little waifs sleep within sound of the bells of Florence, deaf to their beloved notes, blind to the beauty of the country which proved to them a happier home than they had ever hoped to find it.



THE BURGLAR'S STORY *

By MISS H. JOWITT

When I became eighteen years of age, my father, a distinguished begging-letter impostor, said to me, "Reginald, I think it is time that you began to think about choosing a profession."

These were ominous words. Since I left Eton, nearly a year before, I had spent my time very pleasantly and very idly, and I was sorry to see my long holiday drawing to a close. My father had hoped to have sent me to Cambridge (Cambridge was a tradition in our family), but business had been very depressed of late, and a sentence of six months' hard labor had considerably straitened my poor father's resources.

It was necessary—highly necessary—that I should choose a calling. With a sigh of resignation I admitted as much.

"If you like," said my father, "I'll take you in hand, and teach you my profession, and in a few years perhaps I may take you into partnership; but, to be candid with you, I doubt whether it is a satisfactory calling for an athletic young fellow like you."

"I don't seem to care about it particularly," said I.

"I'm glad to hear it," said my father; "it's a poor calling for a young man of spirit. Besides, you have to grow gray in the service before people will listen to you. It's all very well as a refuge in old age; but a young fellow is likely to make but a poor hand at it. Now, I should like to consult your own tastes on so important a matter as the choice of a profession. What do you say? The army?"

No, I didn't care for the army.

"Forgery? The bar? Cornish wrecking?"

"Father," said I, "I should like to be a forger, but I write such an infernal hand."

"A regular Eton hand," said he. "Not plastic enough for forgery; but you could have a writing master."

"It's as much as I can do to forge my own name. I don't believe I should ever be able to forge anybody else's."

* An amusing satire selected from London "Tit-Bits"

“‘Anybody’s else,’ you should say, not ‘anybody else’s.’ It’s a dreadful barbarism. Eton English.”

“No,” said I, “I should never make a fortune at it. As to wrecking—why, you know how sea-sick I am.”

“You might get over that. Besides, you would deal with wrecks ashore, not wrecks at sea.”

“Most of it’s done in small boats, I’m told. A deal of small boat work. No, I won’t be a wrecker. I think I should like to be a burglar.”

“Yes,” said my father, considering the subject. “Yes, it’s a fine, manly profession, but it’s dangerous, it’s highly dangerous.”

“Just dangerous enough to be exciting, no more.”

“Well,” said my father, “if you’ve a distinct taste for burglary I’ll see what can be done.”

My dear father was always prompt with pen and ink. That evening he wrote to his old friend Ferdinand Stoneleigh, a burglar of the very highest professional standing, and in a week I was duly and formally articulated to him, with a view to ultimate partnership.

I had to work hard under Mr. Stoneleigh.

“Burglary is a jealous mistress,” said he. “She will tolerate no rivals. She exacts the undivided devotion of her worshippers.”

And so I found it. Every morning at ten o’clock I had to present myself at Stoneleigh’s chambers in New square, Lincoln’s Inn, and until twelve I assisted his clerk with the correspondence. At twelve I had to go out prospecting with Stoneleigh, and from two to four I had to devote to finding out all particulars necessary, to a scientific burglar, in any given house.

At first I did this merely for practice, and with no view to an actual attempt. He would tell me off to a house of which he knew all the particulars, and order me to ascertain all about that house and its inmates—their coming and going, the number of their servants, whether any of them were men, and if so, whether they slept on the basement or not, and other details necessary to be known before a burglary could be safely attempted. Then he would compare my information with his own facts, and compliment or blame me, as I might deserve. He was a strict master, but

always kind, just, and courteous, as became a highly polished gentleman of the old school. He was one of the last men who habitually wore hessians.

After a year's probation I accompanied him on several expeditions, and had the happiness to believe that I was of some little use to him. I shot him eventually in the stomach, mistaking him for the master of a house into which we were breaking (I had mislaid my dark lantern), and he died on the grand piano. His dying wish was that his compliments might be conveyed to me.

I now set up on my own account, and engaged his poor old clerk, who nearly broke his heart at his late master's funeral. Stoneleigh left no family. His money—about £12,000, invested for the most part in American railways—he left to the Society for Providing More Bishops, and his ledgers, day-books, memoranda, and papers generally he bequeathed to me.

As the chambers required furnishing, I lost no time in commencing my professional duties. I looked through his books for a suitable house to begin upon, and found the following attractive entry:

Thurloe Square.—No. 102.

House.—Medium.

Occupant.—John Davis, bachelor.

Occupation.—Designer of dados.

Age.—Eighty-six.

Physical Peculiarities.—Very feeble; eccentric; drinks; evangelical; snores.

Servants.—Two housemaids, one cook.

Sex.—All female.

Particulars of Servants.—Pretty housemaid called Rachel; Jewess. Open to attentions. Goes out for beer at 9 P. M.; snores. Ugly housemaid called Bella; Presbyterian. Open to attentions; snores. Elderly cook; Primitive Methodist. Open to attentions; snores.

Fastenings.—Chubb's lock on street door, chain and bolts. Bars to all basement windows. Practicable approach from third room, ground floor, which is shuttered and barred, but bar has no catch, and can be raised with table knife.

Valuable Contents of House.—Presentation plate from grateful æsthetes. Gold repeater. Mulready envelope. Two diamond rings. Complete edition of "Bradshaw," from 1834 to present time, 588 vols., bound limp calf.

General.—Mr. Davis sleeps second floor front; servants on third floor. Davis goes to bed at 10. No one on basement. Swarms with beetles; otherwise excellent house for purpose.

This seemed to me to be a capital house to try single-handed. At 12 o'clock that very night I pocketed two crowbars, a bunch of skeleton keys, a centre-bit, a dark lantern, a box of silent matches, some putty, a life-preserver, and a knife, and I set off at once for Thurloe square. I remember that it snowed heavily. There was at least a foot of snow on the ground, and there was more to come. Poor Stoneleigh's particulars were exact in every detail. I got into the third room on the ground floor without the least difficulty, and made my way into the dining-room. There was the presentation plate, sure enough—about 800 ounces as I reckoned. I collected this and tied it up so that I could carry it out without attracting attention.

Just as I finished I heard a slight cough behind me. I turned and saw a dear old silver-haired gentleman in a dressing-gown standing in the doorway. The venerable gentleman covered me with a revolver.

My first impulse was to rush at and brain him with my life-preserver.

"Don't move," said he, "or you're a dead man."

A rather silly remark to the effect that if I did move it would rather prove that I was a live man occurred to me, but I dismissed it at once as unsuited to the business character of the interview.

"You're a burglar?" said he.

"I have that honor," said I, making for my pistol-pocket.

"Don't move," said he. "I have often wished to have the pleasure of encountering a burglar, in order to be able to test a favorite theory of mine, as to how persons of that class should be dealt with. But you mustn't move."

I replied that I should be happy to assist him if I could do so consistently with a due regard to my own safety.

"Promise me," said I, "that you will allow me to leave the house unmolested when your experiment is at an end?"

"If you will obey me promptly you shall be at perfect liberty to leave the house."

"You will neither give me into custody nor take any steps to pursue me?"

"On my honor as a designer of dados," said he.

"Good," said I. "Go on."

"Stand up," said he, "and stretch out your arms at right angles to your body."

"Suppose I don't?" said I.

"I send a bullet through your left ear," said he.

"But permit me to observe—" said I.

Bang! A bullet cut off the lobe of my left ear:

The ear smarted, and I should have liked to attend to it, but under the circumstances I thought it better to comply with the whimsical old gentleman's wishes.

"Very good!" said he. "Now do as I tell you, promptly and without a moment's hesitation, or I cut off the lobe of your right ear. Throw me that life-preserver."

"But——"

"Ah! would you?" said he, cocking the revolver.

The "click" decided me. Besides, the old gentleman's eccentricity amused me, and I was curious to see how far it would carry him. So I tossed my life-preserver to him. He caught it neatly.

"Now take off your coat and throw it to me."

I took off my coat and threw it to him diagonally across the room.

"Now the waistcoat."

I threw the waistcoat to him.

"Boots," said he.

"They are shoes," said I in some trepidation lest he should take offence when no offence was really intended.

"Shoes, then," said he.

I threw my shoes to him.

"Trousers," said he.

"Come, come, I say!" exclaimed I.

Bang! The lobe of the other ear came off. With all his eccentricity the old gentleman was a man of his word. He had the trousers, and with them my revolver, which happened to be in the right hand pocket.

"Now the rest of your drapery."

I threw him the rest of my drapery. He tied up my clothes in the tablecloth, and telling me that he wouldn't detain me any longer, made for the door, with the bundle under his arm.

"Stop," said I. "What is to become of me?"

"Really, I hardly know," said he.

"You promised me my liberty," said I.

"Certainly," said he. "Don't let me trespass any further on your time. You will find the street door open; or, if from force of habit you prefer the window, you will have no difficulty in clearing the area railings."

"But I can't go like this! Won't you give me something to put on?"

"No," said he, "nothing at all. Good-night."

The quaint old man left the room with my bundle. I went after him, but I found that he had locked an inner door that led upstairs. The position was really a difficult one to deal with. I couldn't possibly go into the street as I was, and if I remained I should certainly be given into custody in the morning. For some time I looked in vain for something to cover me with. The hats and greatcoats were no doubt in the inner hall—at all events, they were not accessible under the circumstances. There was a carpet on the floor, but it was fitted to the recesses of the room, and, moreover, a heavy sideboard stood on it.

However, there were twelve chairs in the room, and it was with no little pleasure I found that on the back of each was an antimacassar. Twelve antimacassars would go a good way towards covering me, and that was something.

I did my best with the antimacassars, but on reflection came to the conclusion that they would not help me very much. They certainly covered me; but a gentleman walking through South Kensington at 3 a.m. dressed in nothing whatever but antimacassars, with the snow two feet deep on the ground, would be sure to attract attention. I might pretend I was doing it for a wager, but who would believe me?

I grew very cold.

I looked out of the window, and presently I saw the bull's-eye of a policeman who was wearily plodding through the snow. I felt that my only course was to surrender to him.

"Policeman," said I, from the window, "one word."

"Anything wrong, sir?" said he.

"I have been committing a burglary in this house, and I shall feel deeply obliged to you if you will kindly take me into custody."

"Nonsense, sir," said he; "you'd better go to bed."

"There is nothing I should like better, but I live in

Lincoln's Inn, and I have nothing on but antimacassars. I am almost frozen. Pray take me into custody."

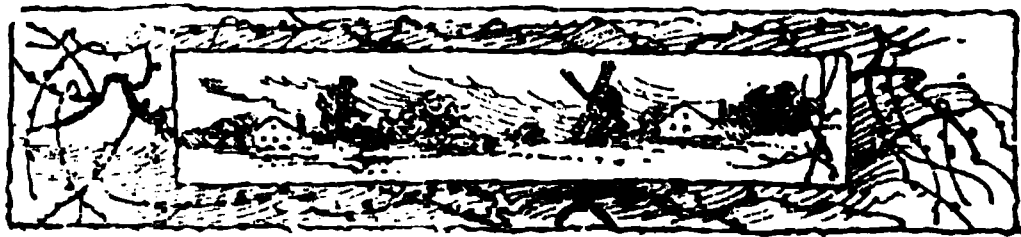
"The street door's open," said he.

"Yes," said I. "Come in."

He came in. I explained the circumstances to him, and with great difficulty I convinced him that I was in earnest. The good fellow put his own greatcoat over me, and lent me his own handcuffs. In ten minutes I was thawing myself in Walton street police station. In ten days I was convicted at the Old Bailey. In ten years I returned from penal servitude.

I found that Mr. Davis had gone to his long home in Brompton cemetery.

For many years I never passed his house without a shudder at the terrible hours I spent in it as his guest. I have often tried to forget the incident I have been relating, and for a long time tried in vain. Perseverance, however, met with its reward. I continued to try. Gradually one detail after another slipped from my recollection, and one lovely evening last May I found, to my intense delight, that I had absolutely forgotten all about it.





THE LAST KING OF YVETOT*

BY E. M. VACANO

Who has not read Béranger's charming little poem? But for it, no one nowadays, except the book-worms, would ever have heard of the "kingdom of Yvetot." But this little song of Béranger's has impressed the droll kingdom upon our hearts; and that tiny country, which once really existed, but which would have been forgotten long ago, in spite of chronicles and histories, will now live forever. True magicians, these poets, I can tell you!

And yet very few people trouble themselves about the real history of Yvetot. At the most, they may have read in some encyclopædia, about as follows: "Yvetot, a small market-town in Normandy, formed for some time an independent kingdom."

In the year 537 King Chlotarius had the misfortune to slay with his own hand one of his subjects in the church of Soissons. This retainer was called Gaultier of Yvetot, and to him belonged a small manor-house, surrounded by fields and gardens. The fact that the king had committed murder sig-

* An interesting story of court life in France during the reign of Louis XIV. Translated by M. von Nerta, and illustrated for *Short Stories*.—Copyrighted.

nified but little in those days; but that the sanctity of a church had been violated—that, the pope could not overlook. So he threatened excommunication.

Then was King Chlotarius indeed repentant, and promised to do anything to expiate his “fault.” So he freed the bit of land, which had belonged to the unfortunate Gaultier, from all allegiance to the French kings, and raised it to an independent kingdom, and made the descendants of Gaultier sovereign kings in the middle of his own dominion.

The “castle” of Yvetot, the residence of the kings, in the year 1680 was only a farm-house, but a stately house, surrounded by a large garden and bounded on one side by tall poplars. In the carefully trimmed, square and three-cornered hedges of this garden stood mythological statues in the most approved ballet-dancer’s positions. Weather-stained busts of Roman emperors or gods stared from all the corners of the house; the flower-beds were spiral-shaped, and in the middle of the fountain a noseless Neptune menaced all comers with a broken trident.

His majesty King Camille d’Albon d’Yvetot, was as cultivated a young gentleman as the circumstances would permit and as the village schoolmaster had been able to make of him. He was, at any rate, a young man full of life and vigor. A fine young man, if one can trust the picture that hung thirty years ago in the apothecary’s parlor at Yvetot; tall and strong, with a profusion of reddish hair setting off his energetic countenance.

The time came when his subjects beseiged him to take a wife. But King Camille had never yet paid court to any of the only daughters of the country or neighborhood. They called him insufferably proud. At last there came a day, when all the nobility, that is to say the steward, the forester, the schoolmaster, the gardener and the grocer, took advantage of an audience to represent to his majesty in all reverence that it was his duty to give to the country a mother, to his kingdom a queen, an heir to his throne, and to find a wife, if possible, *qui avait des écus*.

“C’EST DE NOTRE RANG”

So on a lovely Summer evening, when the lindens in the garden were waving, and the tall lilies in the flower-beds

glowed like burning candles, the young king said to his mother, the Queen-dowager Adelaide Charlotte d'Albon, who was sitting in one of the deep window recesses of her room, mending her son's stockings; "It cannot be put off, mother; I must begin to think of getting married."

She let her work fall in her lap. "I have thought so for a long time, my son!" said she earnestly. "I have been looking for some time, among the young ladies of rank in the neighborhood, for I wished to surprise you with a bride who would be worthy of your rank and our condition."

"I thank you, mother," said he, somewhat anxiously. "And you have found no one?"

"Not yet, my son. So I have concluded that it will be best for you to look for a bride yourself."

"What is the use? Is it not all the same, whom I marry?"

"My son, does a king speak in that way? Your rank, your dignity!"

Madame Adelaide Charlotte d'Albon was indeed a true queen, the daughter of a rich baron of Vermandon, of the castle of Montmayor. It was said the late King Alain had not married her for love, and that he had bestowed his young heart, long before, upon Mlle. Delrien, the pretty daughter of the notary.

"I mean, is it not all the same, whom I marry?" said the young man, sighing as the sweet scent of the late Summer roses was wafted in through the open windows. "Dare I question my own heart? Will it not always be 'No,' if a maiden should happen to please me? Happy I shall never be!"

"My son, my son! No King of Yvetot has ever been happy in his married life!" said the lady, with a solemnity that was almost ludicrous, but not without a touch of sadness, "for not one has ever married according to his own fancy. That is the penalty, but also the prerogative of our rank! But that is a sorrow we women mostly have to bear. His majesty King Nicolas of Yvetot, who hangs up there in the picture gallery, with such a smiling face, drank himself to death. Queen Liane, a born Duchess of Santifleurin, died of a broken heart. *C'est de notre rang, mon fils.* Look at your 'cousin,' his majesty of France, was he happy with the little, brown, spiritless Princess of Spain? Or were I

and your father Alain happy? On our wedding-day he wept bitterly, and confessed to me in his blunt way, that he loved Mlle. Delrien, a notary's daughter. That made my heart sad and lonely all my life. But I tried to be a good wife, and to do my duty. And so will you, probably, not love your wife, and she will not be happy; but you will bear with each other, and fulfil your destiny."

"But is not that sad, mother?"

"It only seems so to you, my son, because you are young, because you are twenty years old, and because it is Summer outside. Perhaps it is not very pleasant, but it is life. So look around bravely, and make your choice."

"But without love, mother!"

"My son, what is love? When you were a boy, you used to delight to play with Lisette, our gardener's daughter, and you were inseparable from her. I used to watch you often playing by the shining river. The pretty child would sit barefooted on the bank, the switch in her hand with which she tended her geese, and as the sun touched it, it looked like a scepter of gold; and you, my son, barefooted too, and with a torn ruff, crowned the little girl with a diadem of gleaming gold wild-flowers. So love appears to me. A scene of childhood, so charming that it casts a glamor upon later years, a joy which belongs to youth, as flowers belong to summer time, but not a thing which ought to influence our lives. Seek a wife, then, as duty dictates."

"Where, mother?"

"Why, where but at the court of the King of France? There you can choose. There are handsome girls in the noblest families, rich besides. It would be a pity if you could find no one whom you could bring back as queen. And you can make your choice there with your cousin's advice, and not without that advice, my son!"

"Do you mean, mother?—ah, yes, I should like to go to Paris. I remember the splendid court, which I saw once as a boy, the columns the gold, the lofty rooms, the splendid company, the beautiful women, covered with jewels, and trailing their robes and smiling. All smiling. But—" and he looked down at his leathern jacket.

"I know what you would say, my son. But your blue silk suit is very nicely mended, and the black velvet with the

gold embroidery, is as good as new in front, and behind where it is worn shabby, your cloak hangs over it. And then," she added, with true mother pride "are you not handsome? I should like to see the woman, were she a duchess, who would say 'no' to your suit."

I wonder if King Camille were handsome, according to the standard of that effeminate age? At any rate he was handsome in a manly style. His rather long sun-browned features were strong and full of pride and energy. From his sea-gray eyes beamed a heart full of kindness. There was a dull red spot in one of his eyes—the mark of a flash of lightning which had once frightened his mother. When he was a child, she had asked a gypsy once about this mark. But the woman had only shrugged her shoulders, laughed, and muttered something unintelligible. To the servants below, however, who later claimed her services, she had said with an air of great mystery: "I didn't want to tell the good lady upstairs, for she paid me well, and I saw she was anxious; but the spot in the little prince's eye, betokens something remarkable: he will be the last of his dynasty, the last King of Yvetot!"

MARLBROUK S'EN VA-T-EN GUERRE

And so the day arrived when King Camille was prepared to betake himself to the court of his "cousin," the king of France. The queen busied herself with his packing, with a fond mother's solicitude, but without departing from her dignity. When he went to take leave of her, he found her in the large lower hall, surrounded by some beggars and by many dwellers in the little town, who were accustomed to come to her for comfort or relief. For it was a Saturday, when the queen-mother gave public "audience," as she called it. She laid the loaf which she was dividing with the other loaves which were ready to be distributed, she closed with a snap the chatelaine which hung at her girdle and from which she took her alms, she shut the cupboard where she kept her medicines and wines for the sick, and then followed her son.

"See what a good thing it is to be a king, my son! There is but little money in the house, for we shall not receive our revenue yet for several days. If I were simply the lady of the house, I should say: 'Nothing to-day, my children,' and

my doors would be closed. But all those are our subjects, my son, and if we have nothing ourselves, they must have something!"

"You are a true queen, madame!" said Camille, reverently kissing her hand.

"I hope so," she replied, with simple dignity.

"And now I will set out, and I will bring a queen back with me," said he; "and I will remember you in choosing a wife, mother, for she must be worthy of you!"

So he set forth on his quest for a bride, in the shabby rumbling old coach. And his mother looked after him, at the uncovered young head which nodded back at her, and her eyes filled with true mother tears. And behind the hedge some one was weeping. It was Lisette, the gar-



dener's daughter, and she did not know herself why she wept.

It was a gloomy autumn day. The leaves were dropping in showers from the poplars, for a raw cold wind had risen, and a sharp rain was falling from the dull gray sky.

It seemed as if the whole landscape were sad, as if the whole tiny kingdom were weeping for its king.

DEUX COUSINS ET UNE MARQUISE

The court of France! The court of Louis the Great, Louis the Only, the Sun-King! A sun, to be sure, which had long passed its meridian. The pleasure-loving, charming, radiant Louis of forty had become the embodiment of arrogant pride and haughtiness, under the peculiar influence of the Widow Scarron with her mock humility and lofty ambition.

Only occasionally there flared up in the royal old roué that spark of youth which had been love once, but had now

become ridiculous amorousness. To be sure, this feeling sprang from the same source as his youthful loves: selfishness, self-adoration, which seized anything which took his fancy, regardless of consequences, almost barbarously, only to throw carelessly aside that which had given him pleasure, as he did the shabby peruke which yesterday had added to his dignity.

For a long time the Sun-King had been accustomed to hold his most agreeable court in the apartments of the Maintenon, or rather he was obliged to do so, for she could not give up her habits of government, and had long held the great monarch in leading strings.

How can one describe such a court? A half-ceremonious, half-frivolous throng of those who were "commanded" to attend. The Maintenon affected a disregard of all etiquette. But how was that possible, when the personification of etiquette, the personification of despotism, was present in his ostentatiously plain brown coat, an enormous peruke on his grotesque shrivelled-up head, and with his mincing step and his air of dignified coquetry—trying to be young, wishing to be a God, craving adoration, omnipotent? All his remaining grandchildren hovered around, fawning upon the Maintenon, and secretly laughing at their grandpapa. They were all people who hoped to gain something by professing piety, or who had beautiful relatives who might have the good fortune to be included in the king's household.

It was an evening when the king seemed almost youthful. Old age has such days, when it feels rejuvenated by some idea or other, like a ray of sunshine. And it was consequently an evening when Mme. de Maintenon was more prudish and ill-humored than usual. For she saw that the old king was in good spirits, and there was always danger in that for her, for she bound him to her only through his ennui and loneliness.

Louis the Great, therefore, received *son cher cousin*, the king of Yvetot, very kindly. But what had occasioned these good spirits? Perhaps it was the arrival of the young Mlle. de Montargis, who had come to-day for the first time with her father, a nobleman of Poitou.

Mlle. de Montargis was indeed charming; still almost a child, fresh, ingenuous and artless. It is true that the

mantle which she trailed behind her had been cut from a court-dress of her grandmother's, and that her ornaments were old-fashioned; but the finest attire could not have enhanced her beauty and grace.

The courtiers remarked the favor which the king bestowed upon the young lady. He conversed with her, he was lively, amiable and gallant. He was even heard to say: "That brow deserves to wear a duchess' coronet! Well, we shall see, we shall see!"

That was enough for the court. In flocks they forsook the canopy on which the Maintenon was seated as on a throne, and followed at a respectful distance the lucky old Lord of Montargis, who, his head quite turned with pride, was leading his daughter around, as if in triumph.

In such good humor, then, did Louis the Great receive his little cousin of Yvetot, and made him welcome. "He will make his fortune," everyone whispered, and the ladies had their sweetest smiles for "King Camille," and the cavaliers patronized him most condescendingly. The young king from the country basked in the full radiance of the gracious sun-light which beamed upon him.

"Now, cousin, I will present you to our dear friend, Mme. la Marquise de Maintenon."

They stopped before the now almost deserted throne of the marquise, and the king presented him with a wave of the hand, whereupon Camille bowed low and ceremoniously before the wrinkled old woman with the sharp ugly features and the large evil black eyes, into which she vainly tried to throw an amiable expression. The marquise barely acknowledged the salutation, and there was something feline in her haughty and angry expression. The fan in her nervous fingers shook with rage.

"Oh," she whispered maliciously to the king, "is it carnival time? What did you call this gentleman?"

"Why, his majesty of Yvetot, marquise," said Louis, good-

naturedly. "My dear cousin from the country, who honors us with a visit at our court, where we trust his majesty may long please to remain."

Thereupon he withdrew with a grave inclination of the head, leaving his protégé with the marquise.

"How the king loves him!" was whispered on all sides.

"How he favors the young man!"

"Oh, ah!" said the marquise scornfully, "I have heard of the kings of Yvetot, the caprice of some old Merovingian."

"The caprice of a king, Mme. la Marquise!" replied Camille, flushing proudly, and drawing himself up to his full height.

The marquise threw him a wicked glance.

"Indeed!" she said slowly, and again the feline expression appeared, and her evil temper betrayed itself in the motions of her fan. "Your kingdom must give you a great deal of trouble, sire" (how spitefully she emphasized the last word); "are you not afraid that during your absence a storm might come and blow away your beloved Yvetot?"

That was intended for wit, for she laughed, and her merriment was echoed by those around her.

Camille would have liked to have returned a spiteful answer to the ugly little woman, but he controlled himself, and said quietly: "That is hardly to be feared, Mme. la Marquise, for the kingdom of Yvetot, small as it is, is as old as our history, and has stood firm and unassailable, through the storms of the times. It is only the new dukedoms, earldoms, and marquisates, that are created by a breath of favor, that can be reduced to nothing again as easily."

As he spoke he bowed low and with great politeness.

The marquise looked as if she would like to fly in his face; there were moments when the former Mme. Scarron was uppermost in her nature. Then she heard some one titter. It was a fact, they were actually laughing at her! It was only a stifled laugh behind one's fan, but subdued as it was, and not more audible than the falling of a leaf, yet the sharp ears of the marquise heard it. Had it gone as far as that? Every one had noticed with what marked amiability the king had received the little Mlle. de Montargis; so they all saw in her the future star at the court of the Sun-King, and

they saw her, the marquise, already pushed aside, eclipsed by the rising star!

A star indeed! Like a star the young girl appeared to the King of Yvetot, as he suddenly found himself face to face with her as he turned to leave the marquise. It was a mutual awakening, for the young girl, too, stood transfixed under Camille's glance, as if she saw now, for the first time, one of whom she had long dreamed. Only for an instant did the young man and the maiden gaze into each others' eyes, but they recognized each other, as often two bird-notes mingle in the Summer air, as two fleecy clouds melt together.

"Who was that lady?" asked Camille, starting as from a dream, of a courtier to whom he had just been introduced.

"That? That is Mlle. de Montargis—Diane de Montargis; in a week, probably, Duchesse de Montargis, if all signs do not fail."

"Who was that cavalier?" asked on her side Mlle. de Montargis, of the old Prince Gémenée who stood near her father. "That? That is a king, mademoiselle!"

"A king!" said she, surprised. "You are jesting."

"No, indeed, mademoiselle, the handsome young man is really a king—but only of Yvetot, to be sure!"

These looks and questions of the young people, the breathless glances with which they met and parted, were remarked by one who had more experience in such matters than any other, by Mme. de Maintenon, and like a flash it penetrated her gloomy soul. "Is that the way it stands? That may be useful to me!"

À LA GUERRE, COMME À LA GUERRE

The next day all Versailles was surprised, and with good reason, when it was learned that Mlle. de Montargis, the rising star, had been taken under the somewhat doubtful wing of Mme. de Maintenon for protection. Diane de Montargis could not help it; she was obliged to lodge in her apartments as long as the court remained at Versailles, as her father had been appropriated by the Chevalier d'Aubigné, a cousin of the marquise.

"Of course, she will not let the child out of her sight," simpered the Duchess of Burgundy, shrugging her shoulders.

"That is clever of the good marquise," maliciously ob-

served the young Duke of Maine, one of the most corrupt of the courtiers.

"Be that as it may, our *chère tante* has some end in view!" replied the duchess. "No doubt she contemplates a skillful *coup*, for she is as sly as a fox and as wise as a serpent."

Madame de Maintenon had indeed a motive in the matter. For on the day but one following, she requested "His majesty King Camille of Yvetot" to come to her. And when the young man appeared before the all-powerful friend of his "cousin" she hastened to him with the most amiable smiles, extended her hands and said, "Oh, sire!" (she actually called him "sire" quite seriously) "how kind of you to come—or I should rather say, how gracious! Will you forgive me for asking you to come to me—to me, an old woman? But why do I ask? Your presence shows me you are not angry."

"Angry, Mme. la Marquise?" said Camille, "and why should I be?"

"Oh, you know only too well! On account of my bad temper, my impoliteness the other day. But what can you expect? We poor women are always acting from impulse, and I have been in a frightful mood lately, positively frightful! To be sure, I have had reason enough for it. You see, I am childish enough to wish to see every one happy, and above all things it makes me sad if I see danger threatening a young girl whose pure glance, clear as an angel's, may be clouded by the frivolity and corruption of a court like this. In short, I have been troubled about our pretty little Dïane de Montargis. Have you noticed her? I loved her from the first moment, and was shocked to hear and see what dangers threatened the poor child, from the first hour, from wicked men! So the next day I made short work of it and brought the child to me, and separated her from her grasping old father, and since then I have been happy and contented. Contented? Not quite; I am only a poor, weak woman, and must get first of all a friend and protector for the child. But whom? Whom, among all the selfish, frivolous, conscienceless men of the court? Then an idea occurred to me, or was suggested to me rather by the child herself, for ever since she has been with me, she has talked in her frank, innocent way, of no one but you, sire! If it were true that

you were a king, and that it was a pity, and were you going away soon, and if I knew you very well, and if you were as good and brave and noble as you looked, and all such chatter of a girl in love—but what is the matter, sire?”

For Camille of Yvetot had become scarlet up to his blonde hair, which fell in long locks over his shoulders, and his bright eyes glowed strangely, as if dazzled by the sight of an unexpected, longed-for happiness.

“I,” he stammered, confused—“I—nothing, Mme. la Marquise.”

“Oh, I understand,” and she smiled with almost maternal tenderness. “You think it strange that I should speak so openly to you. The tone that prevails here seems to you, a country gentleman—oh, pardon! a rural king—somewhat peculiar, does it not? But what would you have? I have taken a fancy to you. I have discovered in you a brave and honorable nature, and I want to give the poor child a true friend, a brother; one who has no protector but an intriguing father, who would sacrifice anything for the favor of the king, and a title and a position at court. And that is why I asked you to come here, so that you might learn to know the poor child, and that you might see what a treasure of innocence, virtue, and unsophistication she is

“I must go now to the council; is it not ridiculous? A stupid old woman at a cabinet-meeting! But the king will have it so. These meetings of ministers and wise men are all held in my apartments, and I am obliged to be present, *de par le roi*. They must be all assembled by this time in the salon, and I must leave you. But you need not run away, sire, you must wait for me here; I shall not be long, and I have much to say to you yet. Diane shall entertain you in the meantime,” said she, smiling. “So, adieu and au revoir!”

Thereupon she pressed his hand kindly, and going to the portière of an adjoining room, she called:

“Are you there, my child? Keep our dear guest until I return.”

Another smile, a bow, a rustle of drapery, and the marquise disappeared through the large door, and on the threshold of the next room stood Mlle. de Montargis, blushing and smiling, and unsuspecting as a child.

The council lasted unusually long to-day, and hour after hour went by before the marquise returned.

Happy hours, rare hours to two shy and ingenuous, honest and noble hearts! The two young people sat in the deep window-seat of the state apartment of the all-powerful friend of the great king, and talked. At first shyly, then like two happy children, then like two good friends, and at last like—ah! at last they spoke very little. But their eyes beamed so happily upon each other, as if they had just awakened to a beautiful new life, and each knew that he loved, and both hoped—oh! so fervently, so thankfully, so trustingly—that he would be loved in return.

And as they suddenly discovered the marquise, who had

entered noiselessly, standing behind them, they rose in confusion, but glowing with happiness. And the marquise seemed pleased too, and smiled as she was seldom in the habit of smiling, so benevolently, so affectionately, so cordially, and at the same time—so triumphantly! And when Mlle. de Montargis had disappeared in confusion, and the marquise accompanied Camille to the door, she said to him in a bantering way:

"It seems to me, sire, that I have been deceived in you."

"In me?"

"Yes, indeed; I only wished to find a brother for my little protégée"—here she laughed and shook her finger at him threateningly. Camille turned very red, but smiled happily.

"But what else could I be to the young lady? How could I dare——?"

"Dare! Fie! does a handsome young man like you speak so? And—a king too! Now, now, I have said nothing; but this I know: in future I shall find you too dangerous for a brother for my pretty Diane. I shall strike you from the list of her protectors, until you——"

"Until——"

"Until you become her bridegroom. Good heavens! Sire, if I were in your place, I would go this very day to your cousin, and say: 'I want her.' What right has the king to refuse?"

"But her father!"

"Oh! he is crazy for a title. Would not his daughter be—queen?"

"Yes, but of Yvetot."

"Ah! but is not a Queen of Yvetot better than a Duchess of La Vallière?"

"You are right, Mme. Marquise!" said he, turning pale.

"But the young lady herself——"

She looked at him, smiled, then tapped him on the mouth with her fan. "Ah, what a deceiver!"

So the time came when the King of Yvetot stood before his "cousin" of France, and begged he would give his sanction to his marriage with Mlle. de Montargis. The king was beside himself for a moment; then he assumed his most dignified air, and gave his answer, "No, never!"

By good luck the marquise was present, and with a sharp voice but most amiable smile, remarked: "Why not, sire? Do not the two young people love each other?"

"It is not possible!" stormed the old king.

"Oh, but it is true! As for Mlle. de Montargis, I know it from the dear child herself; and as for his majesty of Yvetot——" she continued, smiling.

"But her father!" protested the king.

"Is already very happy at the prospect of having grandchildren who can wear a coronet," said the marquise, gently.

"But she has no fortune," said Louis the Great.

"Ah, sire! you know I am a childless old woman, and I love Diane so dearly!"

A meaning look shot from the old king's eyes. But he had recovered his dignity—I had almost said his pride. And he turned to the King of Yvetot. "It is well," he said, and his lips trembled with scorn. "I give my consent, my cousin, and I wish you joy!"

Camille thanked his cousin rapturously, but when he saw the mocking smile, the cruel expression of the king's face, his heart turned cold, and he thought: "He will ruin us; but how?" After he had taken his leave, Louis the Great turned to the marquise, and said to her with chilling scorn: "You have acted very inconsiderately, Mme. la Marquise!"

"I have saved you from committing a sin, sire," said the lady, courtesying humbly.

"LE ROI EST MORT; VIVE LE ROI!"

The wedding was celebrated at the royal "palace" of Yvetot. Banners waved, and garlands were wreathed from tree to tree. It was Spring-time; the larks were trilling, sweet odors filled the air, and gladness reigned in every heart.

And just at the time of the wedding there came an edict from the king, a royal message to the house of joy. King Camille read it through, then handed it to his lovely young bride, and they looked at it together, and smiled. The edict proclaimed that the Kings of Yvetot should be henceforth deprived of their royalty, and the country of its independence. It was to be in the future only an estate, like any other, except that it would be free from taxation.

"Poor Diane!" whispered Camille in his bride's ear, as he pressed her to his heart. "You are no longer a queen!"

"Oh!" and she smiled blissfully at him, "I am something much better. I am your wife!"

LOULETTE*

BY RUTH LAWRENCE

was seven and he was seventy. She was mute and he was blind. Her eyes served them both, and his cracked voice gained their daily bread. She was always by his side, to lead him to and fro through the thronged squares and crowded thoroughfares of the great town in which they dwelt. He, with his lean fingers, picked a tune on the old violin which hung upon his shoulder, or crooned in tremulous tones some old time ballad. Her hair was chestnut, with a tinge of red, while time had turned his locks to silver white.

They lived in an old attic in a dingy street, where everything was falling to decay. Often the Winter winds blew fiercely through broken panes of their one casement, and in the rainy season rude drops dripped mercilessly from the roof; but they were uncomplaining, for they had always been afflicted—and often the most afflicted are the most patient.

In his long life of sorrow and privation, she was the dearest friend that he had known, and she had known no friend save him, in all her days. She had loved him since he brought her home in his arms, a little helpless thing whose eyes had just been opened on the light o' day.

When they came in, footsore and weary from their wandering, she would help him up the creaking stairs, and then go quietly back to the dark alley below to fetch their can of milk and the bread from the baker. When she returned again, old Matthieu would take

* A touching story of devotion and affliction. Written and illustrated for Short Stories.—Copyrighted.

her on his knee and tell her tales of happier days that he had known; would caress her, saying, "Loulette, my little one, thou art my sight, my helper, my one friend in this vast and noisy city, where men are so hard pressed in the vain race for life that they have no time for the afflicted such as I. Yet thou, who art so weak and helpless in thyself, givest me strength and comfort." She would look up at him with her sad eyes, lay her head against his breast and sigh—for alas! she could not speak.

Sometimes, when the fitful shafts of pallid sunlight flickered into the attic on a winter's morn, he would ask, "Loulette, does the sun shine?" and she would gently fondle his hand in response.

"Then God be thanked! for though I cannot see, thousands of beings are cheered by its welcome light; and in the land where flowers come and grain grows, the country-folk see in the warm sun-rays the food for hungry mouths."

Loulette sighed, and he stroked her head. "Thou sighest because I cannot see the sun. I would that God had let thee speak."

Once when the heat was bitter, and the narrow streets had grown stifling, they wandered from the city, upon a broad white dusty road, far from the noise and din; on they went until they reached soft meadows, shadowed by green trees and cool with tinkling streams. For weeks they strayed through villages and hamlets, whose rustic householders gave them cheer and welcome for the sake of the old man's songs and Loulette's sweet eyes.

At last, when Autumn (cunning alchemist!) had turned the birch trees' silver into gold, and dyed the forest leaves with gorgeous hues more brilliant than the fabrics of the East, they turned their steps again toward the town.

"We must return to the toil and bustle, Loulette," said old Matthieu. "The Summer is dead, and the sombre city is a fitter spot, for such as we, when the winds moan and the gloomy skies begin to shower snowflakes. The ladies in the square, who used to pause and speak with thee, will find thee grown older and looking well. The sweet young girl whom we meet every morning, coming from church, will remember thee again with cakes and pennies."

Thus, though they mourned the departed Summer, they journeyed cheerfully back to the town. They reached it one fair morning when the market was just opening, and the busy workers beginning to stir abroad. The sight was gay and dazzling to Loulette; and, after the quiet of the country roads, the noise confused her strangely. They crossed the square, where the fountain was flinging its gem-like spray into the crisp morning air, passed the market place and turned to cross the street. There were many carts hurrying up and down, so Loulette and Matthieu waited to let them pass.

When for a moment the stream of vehicles had abated, they ventured forth. Just then, a coarse voice called gruffly to them, as a heavy cart dashed suddenly around the corner.

Loulette pulled Matthieu's coat and forced him back. He turned, and stumbled to a place of safety, but she fell beneath the wheels. The cart dashed on; there was a feeble cry, and Loulette was dead.

A crowd collected around Matthieu, who stood upon the corner weeping bitterly.

"What is the matter?" asked a young woman who was passing on her way to church.

One of the bystanders answered carelessly, "Oh! nothing; the blind Frenchman is crying for his dog."

THE DUKE'S DILEMMA *

A CHRONICLE OF NIESENSTEIN

Famous Story Series

The close of the theatrical year, which in France occurs in early Spring, annually brings to Paris a throng of actors and actresses, the disorganized elements of provincial companies, who repair to the capital to contract engagements for the new season. In bad weather the mart for this human merchandise is at an obscure coffee-house near the Rue St. Honoré; when the sun shines, the place of meeting is in the garden of the Palais Royal. There, pacing to and fro beneath the lime-trees, the high contracting parties pursue their negotiations and make their bargains. It is the theatrical Exchange, the histrionic Bourse. There the conversation and the company are alike curious. Many are the strange discussions and original anecdotes that are there heard; many the odd figures there paraded. Tragedians, comedians, singers, men and women, young and old, flock thither in quest of fortune and a good engagement.

It was a fine morning in April. The sun shone brightly, and amongst the numerous loungers in the garden of the Palais Royal were several groups of actors. The season was already far advanced; all the companies were formed, and those players who had not secured an engagement had but a poor chance of finding one. Their anxiety was legible upon their countenances. A man of about fifty years of age walked to and fro, a newspaper in his hand, and to him, when he passed near them, the actors bowed—respectfully and hopefully. A quick glance was his acknowledgment of their salutation, and then his eyes reverted to his paper, as if it deeply interested him. When he was out of hearing, the actors, who had assumed their most picturesque attitudes to attract his attention, and who beheld their labor lost, vented their ill-humor.

* Tells of an amusing comedy that was played at one of the lesser German courts. Printed anonymously in Blackwood's Mag. in 1853.

"Balthasar is mighty proud," said one; "he has not a word to say to us."

"Perhaps he does not want anybody," remarked another; "I think he has no theatre this year."

"That would be odd. They say he is a clever manager."

"He may best prove his cleverness by keeping aloof. It is so difficult nowadays to do good in the provinces. The public is so fastidious; the authorities are so shabby, so unwilling to put their hands in their pockets. Ah, my dear fellow, our art is sadly fallen!"

Whilst the discontented actors bemoaned themselves, Balthasar eagerly accosted a young man who just then entered the garden by the passage of the Perron. The coffeehouse-keepers had already begun to put out tables under the tender foliage. The two men sat down at one of them.

"Well, Florival," said the manager, "does my offer suit you? Will you make one of us? I was glad to hear you had broken off with Ricardin. With your qualifications you ought to have an engagement in Paris, or at least at a first-rate provincial theatre. But you are young, and, as you know, managers prefer actors of greater experience and established reputation. Your parts are generally taken by youths of five-and-forty, with wrinkles and grey hairs, but well versed in the traditions of the stage—with damaged voices but an excellent style. My brother managers are greedy of great names; yours still has to become known—as yet, you have but your talent to recommend you. I will content myself with that; content yourself with what I offer you. Times are bad, the season is advanced, engagements are hard to find. Many of your comrades have gone to try their luck beyond seas. We have not so far to go; we shall scarcely overstep the boundary of our ungrateful country. Germany invites us; it is a pleasant land, and Rhine wine is not to be disdained.

"I will tell you how the thing came about. For many years past I have managed theatres in the eastern departments, in Alsatia and Lorraine. Last Summer, having a little leisure, I made an excursion to Baden-Baden. As usual, it was crowded with fashionables. One rubbed shoulders with princes and trod upon highnesses' toes; one could not walk twenty yards without meeting a sovereign.

All these crowned heads, kings, grand-dukes, electors, mingled easily and affably with the throng of visitors. Etiquette is banished from the baths of Baden, where, without laying aside their titles, great personages enjoy the liberty and advantages of an incognito.

“At the time of my visit, a company of very indifferent German actors were playing, two or three times a week, in the little theatre. They played to empty benches, and must have starved but for the assistance afforded them by the directors of the gambling-tables. I often went to their performances, and, amongst the scanty spectators, I soon remarked one who was as assiduous as myself. A gentleman, very plainly dressed, but of agreeable countenance and aristocratic appearance, invariably occupied the same stall, and seemed to enjoy the performance, which proved that he was easily pleased. One night he addressed to me some remark with respect to the play then acting; we got into conversation on the subject of dramatic art; he saw that I was specially competent on that topic, and after the theatre he asked me to take refreshment with him. I accepted. At midnight we parted, and, as I was going home, I met a gambler whom I slightly knew. ‘I congratulate you,’ he said; ‘you have friends in high places!’ He alluded to the gentleman with whom I had passed the evening, and who I now learned was no less a personage than his Serene Highness Prince Leopold, sovereign ruler of the Grand Duchy of Niesenstein. I had had the honor of passing a whole evening in familiar intercourse with a crowned head.

“Next day, walking in the park, I met his Highness. I made a low bow and kept at a respectful distance, but the Grand Duke came up to me and asked me to walk with him. Before accepting I thought it right to inform him who I was. ‘I guessed as much,’ said the prince. ‘From one or two things that last night escaped you, I made no doubt you were a theatrical manager.’ And by a gesture he renewed his invitation to accompany him. In a long conversation he informed me of his intention to establish a French theatre in his capital, for the performance of comedy, drama, vaudeville and comic operas. He was then building a large theatre, which would be ready by the end of the winter, and he offered me its management on very advantageous terms. I had no plans in

France for the present year, and the offer was too good to be refused. The Grand Duke guaranteed my expenses and a gratuity, and there was a chance of very large profits. I hesitated not a moment; we exchanged promises, and the affair was concluded.

"According to our agreement, I am to be at Karlstadt, the capital of the Grand Duchy of Niesenstein, in the first week in May. There is no time to lose. My company is almost complete, but there are still some important gaps to fill. Amongst others, I want a lover, a light comedian, and a first singer. I reckon upon you to fill these important posts."

"I am quite willing," replied the actor, "but there is still an obstacle. You must know, my dear Balthasar, that I am deeply in love—seriously, this time—and I broke off with Ricardin solely because he would not engage her to whom I am attached."

"Oho! she is an actress?"

"Two years upon the stage; a lovely girl, full of grace and talent, and with a charming voice. The Opera Comique has not a singer to compare with her."

"And she is disengaged?"

"Yes, my dear fellow; strange though it seems, and by a combination of circumstances which it were tedious to detail, the fascinating Delia is still without an engagement. And I give you notice that henceforward I attach myself to her steps: where she goes, I go; I will perform upon no boards which she does not tread. I am determined to win her heart, and make her my wife."

"Very good!" cried Balthasar, rising from his seat; "tell me the address of this prodigy; I run, I fly, I make every sacrifice; and we will start to-morrow."

People were quite right in saying that Balthasar was a clever manager. None better knew how to deal with actors, often capricious and difficult to guide. He possessed skill, taste, and tact. One hour after the conversation in the garden of the Palais Royal, he had obtained the signatures of Delia and Florival, two excellent acquisitions, destined to do him infinite honor in Germany. That night his little company was complete, and the next day, after a good dinner, it started for Strasburg. It was composed as follows:

Balthasar, manager, was to play the old men, and take the heavy business.

Florival was the leading man, the lover, and the first singer.

Rigolet was the low comedian, and took the parts usually played by Armal and Bouffé.

Similor was to perform the valets in Molière's comedies, and eccentric low comedy characters.

Anselmo was the walking gentleman.

Lebel led the band.

Miss Delia was to display her charms and talents as prima donna, and in genteel comedy.

Miss Foligny was the singing chambermaid.

Miss Alice was the walking lady, and made herself generally useful.

Finally, Madame Pastorale, the duenna of the company, was to perform the old woman, and look after the young ones.

Although so few, the company trusted to atone by zeal and industry for numerical deficiency. It would be easy to find, in the capital of the Grand Duchy, persons capable of filling mute parts, and, in most plays, a few unimportant characters might be suppressed.

The travellers reached Strasburg without adventure worthy of note. There Balthasar allowed them six-and-thirty hours' repose, and took advantage of the halt to write to the Grand Duke Leopold, and inform him of his approaching arrival; then they again started, crossed the Rhine at Kehl, and in thirty hours, after traversing several small German states, reached the frontier of the Grand Duchy of Niesenstein, and stopped at a little village called Krusthal. From this village to the capital the distance was only four leagues, but means of conveyance were wanting. There was but a single stage-coach on that line of road; it would not leave Krusthal for two days, and it held but six persons. No other vehicles were to be had; it was necessary to wait, and the necessity was anything but pleasant. The actors made wry faces at the prospect of passing forty-eight hours in a wretched village. The only persons who easily made up their minds to the wearisome delay were Delia and Florival. The first singer was desperately in love, and the prima donna was not insensible to his delicate attentions and tender discourse.

Balthasar, the most impatient and persevering of all, went out to explore the village. In an hour's time he returned in triumph to his friends, in a light cart drawn by a strong horse. Unfortunately, the cart held but two persons.

"I will set out alone," said Balthasar. "On reaching Karlstadt, I will go to the Grand Duke, explain our position, and I have no doubt he will immediately send carriages to convey you to his capital."

These consolatory words were received with loud cheers by the actors. The driver, a peasant lad, cracked his whip, and the stout Mecklenburg horse set out at a small trot. The four leagues were got over in something less than three hours, which is rather rapid travelling for Germany. It was nearly dark when Balthasar entered Karlstadt. The shops were shut, and there were few persons in the streets; people are early in their habits in the happy lands on the Rhine's right bank. Presently the cart stopped before a good-sized house.

"You told me to take you to our prince's palace," said the driver, "and here it is." Balthasar alighted and entered the dwelling, unchallenged and unimpeded by the sentry who paced lazily up and down in its front. In the entrance-hall the manager met a porter, who bowed gravely to him as he passed; he walked on and passed through an empty ante-room. In the first apartment, appropriated to gentlemen-in-waiting, aides-de-camp, equerries, and other dignitaries of various degree, he found nobody; in a second saloon, lighted by a dim and smoky lamp, was an old gentleman, dressed in black, with powdered hair, who rose slowly at his entrance, looked at him in surprise, and inquired his pleasure.

"I wish to see his Serene Highness the Grand Duke Leopold," replied Balthasar.

"The prince does not grant audiences at this hour," the old gentleman dryly answered.

"His Highness expects me," was the confident reply of Balthasar.

"That is another thing. I will inquire if it be his Highness's pleasure to receive you. Whom shall I announce?"

"The manager of the court theatre."

The gentleman bowed, and left Balthasar alone. The pertinacious manager already began to doubt the success of

his audacity, when he heard the Grand Duke's voice, saying, "Show him in."

He entered. The sovereign of Niesenstein was alone, seated in a large arm-chair, at a table covered with a green cloth, upon which were a confused medley of letters and newspapers, an inkstand, a tobacco-bag, two wax-lights, a sugar-basin, a sword, a plate, gloves, a bottle, books, and a goblet of Bohemian glass, artistically engraved. His Highness was engrossed in a thoroughly national occupation; he was smoking one of those long pipes which Germans rarely lay aside except to eat or to sleep.

The manager of the court theatre bowed thrice, as if he had been advancing to the footlights to address the public; then he stood still and silent, awaiting the prince's pleasure. But, although he said nothing, his countenance was so expressive that the Grand Duke answered him.

"Yes," he said, "here you are. I recollect you perfectly, and I have not forgotten our agreement. But you come at a very unfortunate moment, my dear sir!"

"I crave your Highness's pardon if I have chosen an improper hour to seek an audience," replied Balthasar with another bow.

"It is not the hour that I am thinking of," answered the prince quickly. "Would that were all! See, here is your letter; I was just now reading it, and regretting that, instead of writing to me only three days ago, when you were half-way here, you had not done so two or three weeks before starting."

"I did wrong."

"More so than you think; for, had you sooner warned me, I would have spared you a useless journey."

"Useless!" exclaimed Balthasar aghast. "Has your Highness changed your mind?"

"Not at all; I am still passionately fond of the drama, and should be delighted to have a French theatre here. As far as that goes, my ideas and tastes are in no way altered since last summer; but, unfortunately, I am unable to satisfy them. Look here," continued the prince, rising from his arm-chair. He took Balthasar's arm and led him to a window: "I told you, last year, that I was building a magnificent theatre in my capital."

"Your Highness did tell me so."

"Well, look yonder, on the other side of the square; there the theatre is?"

"Your Highness, I see nothing but an open space; a building commenced, and as yet scarcely above the foundation."

"Precisely so; that is the theatre."

"Your Highness told me it would be completed before the end of Winter."

"I did not then foresee that I should have to stop the works for want of cash to pay the workmen. Such is my present position. If I have no theatre ready to receive you, and if I cannot take you and your company into my pay, it is because I have not the means. The coffers of the state and my privy purse are alike empty. You are astounded! Adversity respects nobody—not even grand dukes. But I support its assaults with philosophy: try to follow my example, and, by way of a beginning, take a chair and a pipe, fill yourself a glass of wine and drink to the return of my prosperity. Since you suffer for my misfortunes, I owe you an explanation. Although I never had much order in my expenditure, I had every reason, at the time I first met with you, to believe my finances in a flourishing condition. It was not until the commencement of the present year that I discovered the contrary to be the case. Last year was a bad one; hail ruined our crops, and money was hard to get in. The salaries of my household were in arrear, and my officers murmured. For the first time I ordered a statement of my affairs to be laid before me, and I found that ever since my accession I had been exceeding my revenue. My first act of sovereignty had been a considerable diminution of the taxes paid to my predecessors. Hence the evil, which had annually augmented; and now I am ruined, loaded with debts, and without means of repairing the disaster. My privy-councillors certainly proposed a way; it was to double the taxes, raise extraordinary contributions—to squeeze my subjects, in short. A fine plan, indeed! to make the poor pay for my improvidence and disorder! Such things may occur in other states, but they shall not occur in mine. Justice before everything. I prefer enduring my difficulties to making my subjects suffer."

"Excellent prince!" exclaimed Balthasar, touched by these generous sentiments. The Grand Duke smiled.

"Do you turn flatterer?" he said. "Beware! it is an arduous post, and you will have none to help you. I have no longer wherewith to pay flatterers; my courtiers have fled. You have seen the emptiness of my anterooms; you met neither chamberlain nor equerry upon your entrance. All those gentlemen have given in their resignations. The civil and military officers of my house, secretaries, aides-de-camp, and others, left me, because I could no longer pay them their wages. I am alone; a few faithful and patient servants are all that remain, and the most important personage of my court is now honest Sigismund, my old valet-de-chambre."

These last words were spoken in a melancholy tone, which pained Balthasar. The eyes of the honest manager glistened. The Grand Duke detected his sympathy.

"Do not pity me," he said with a smile. "It is no sorrow to me to have got rid of a wearisome etiquette, and, at the same time, of a pack of spies and hypocrites, by whom I was formerly from morning till night heset."

The cheerful frankness of the Grand Duke's manner forbade doubt of his sincerity. Balthasar congratulated him on his courage.

"I need it more than you think!" replied Leopold, "and I cannot answer for having enough to support the blows that threaten me. The desertion of my courtiers would be nothing did I owe it only to the bad state of my finances: as soon as I found myself in funds again I could buy others or take back the old ones, and amuse myself by putting my foot upon their servile necks. Then they would be as humble as now they are insolent. But their defection is an omen of other dangers. As the diplomatists say, clouds are at the political horizon. Poverty alone would not have sufficed to clear my palace of men who are as greedy of honors as they are of money; they would have waited for better days; their vanity would have consoled their avarice. If they fled, it was because they felt the ground shake beneath their feet, and because they are in league with my enemies. I cannot shut my eyes to impending dangers. I am on bad terms with Austria; Metternich looks askance at me; at Vienna I am considered too liberal, too popular: they say that

I set a bad example; they reproach me with cheap government, and with not making my subjects sufficiently feel the yoke. Thus do they accumulate pretexts for playing me a scurvy trick. One of my cousins, a colonel in the Austrian service, covets my Grand Duchy. Although I say grand, it is but ten leagues long and eight leagues broad: but such as it is, it suits me; I am accustomed to it, I have the habit of ruling it, and I should miss it were I deprived of it. My cousin has the audacity to dispute my incontestable rights; this is a mere pretext for litigation, but he has carried the case before the Aulic Council, and notwithstanding the excellence of my right I still may lose my cause, for I have no money wherewith to enlighten my judges. My enemies are powerful, treason surrounds me; they try to take advantage of my financial embarrassments, first to make me bankrupt and then to depose me. In this critical conjuncture, I should be only too delighted to have a company of players to divert my thoughts from my troubles—but I have neither theatre nor money. So it is impossible for me to keep you, my dear manager, and, believe me, I am as grieved at it as you can be. All I can do is to give you, out of the little I have left, a small indemnity to cover your travelling expenses and take you back to France. Come and see me to-morrow morning; we will settle this matter, and you shall take your leave."

Balthasar's attention and sympathy had been so completely engrossed by the Grand Duke's misfortunes, and by his revelations of his political and financial difficulties, that his own troubles had quite gone out of his thoughts. When he quitted the palace they came back upon him like a thundercloud. How was he to satisfy the actors, whom he had brought two hundred leagues away from Paris? What could he say to them, how appease them? The unhappy manager passed a miserable night. At daybreak he rose and went into the open air, to calm his agitation and seek a mode of extrication from his difficulties. During a two hours' walk he had abundant time to visit every corner of Karlstadt, and to admire the beauties of that celebrated capital. He found it an elegant town, with wide straight streets cutting completely across it, so that he could see through it at a glance. It was anything but a bustling city; luxury had made but

little progress there; and its prosperity was due chiefly to the moderate desires and philosophy of its inhabitants.

In such a country a company of actors had no chance of a livelihood. There is nothing for it but to return to France, thought Balthasar, after making the circuit of the city; then he looked at his watch, and deeming the hour suitable, he took the road to the palace, which he entered with as little ceremony as upon the preceding evening. The faithful Sigismund, doing duty as gentleman-in-waiting, received him as an old acquaintance, and forthwith ushered him into the Grand Duke's presence. His Highness seemed more depressed than upon the previous day. He was pacing the room with long strides, his eyes cast down, his arms folded. In his hand he held papers, whose perusal it apparently was that had thus discomposed him. For some moments he said nothing; then he suddenly stopped before Balthasar.

"You find me less calm," he said, "than I was last night. I have just received unpleasant news. I am heartily sick of these perpetual vexations, and gladly would I resign this poor sovereignty, this crown of thorns they seek to snatch from me, did not honor command me to maintain to the last my legitimate rights. Yes," vehemently exclaimed the Grand Duke, "at this moment a tranquil existence is all I covet, and I would willingly give up my Grand Duchy, my title, my crown, to live quietly at Paris, as a private gentleman, upon thirty thousand francs a year."

"I believe so, indeed!" cried Balthasar, who in his wildest dreams of fortune, had never dared aspire so high. His artless exclamation made the prince smile. He needed but a trifle to dissipate his vexation, and to restore that upper current of easy good temper which habitually floated upon the surface of his character.

"You think," he gaily cried, "that some, in my place would be satisfied with less, and that thirty thousand francs a year, with independence and the pleasures of Paris, compose a lot more enviable than the government of all the grand duchies in the world. My own experience tells me that you are right; for, ten years ago, when I was but hereditary prince, I passed six months at Paris, rich, independent, careless; and memory declares those to have been the happiest days of my life."

"Well! if you were to sell all you have, could you not realize that fortune? Besides, the cousin, of whom you did me the honor to speak to me yesterday, would probably gladly insure you an income if you yielded him your place here. But will your Highness permit me to speak plainly?"

"By all means."

"The tranquil existence of a private gentleman would doubtless have many charms for you, and you say so in all sincerity of heart; but, upon the other hand, you set store by your crown, though you may not admit it to yourself. In a moment of annoyance it is easy to exaggerate the charms of tranquility, and the pleasures of private life; but, a throne, however rickety, is a seat which none willingly quit. That is my opinion, formed at the dramatic school: it is perhaps a reminiscence of some old part, but truth is sometimes found upon the stage. Since, therefore, all things considered, to stay where you are is that which best becomes you, you ought—— But I crave your Highness's pardon, I am perhaps speaking too freely——"

"Speak on, my dear manager, freely and fearlessly; I listen to you with pleasure. I ought, you were about to say?——"

"Instead of abandoning yourself to despair and poetry, instead of contenting yourself with succumbing nobly, like some ancient Roman, you ought boldly to combat the peril. Circumstances are favorable; you have neither ministers nor state-councillors to mislead you and embarrass your plans. Strong in your good right and in your subjects' love, it is impossible you should not find means of retrieving your finances and strengthening your position."

"There is but one means, and that is—a good marriage."

"Excellent! I had not thought of it. You are a bachelor! A good marriage is salvation. It is thus that great houses, menaced with ruin, regain their former splendor. You must marry an heiress, the only daughter of some rich banker."

"You forget—it would be derogatory. I am free from such prejudices, but what would Austria say if I thus condescended? It would be another charge to bring against me. And then a banker's millions would not suffice; I must ally myself with a powerful family, whose influence will strengthen

mine. Only a few days ago, I thought such an alliance within my grasp. A neighboring prince, Maximilian of Hanau, who is in high favor at Vienna, has a sister to marry! The Princess Wilhelmina is young, handsome, amiable, and rich; I have already entered upon the preliminaries of a matrimonial negotiation, but two despatches, received this morning, destroy all my hopes. Hence the low spirits in which you find me."

Perhaps," said Balthasar, "your Highness too easily gives way to discouragement."

"Judge for yourself. I have a rival, the Elector of Saxe-Tolpelhausen; his territories are less considerable than mine, but he is more solidly established in his little electorate than I am in my Grand Duchy."

"Pardon me, your Highness; I saw the Elector of Saxe-Tolpelhausen last year at Baden-Baden, and, without flattery, he cannot for an instant be compared with your Highness. You are hardly thirty, and he is more than forty; you have a good figure, he is heavy, clumsy, and ill-made; your countenance is noble and agreeable, his common and displeasing; your hair is light brown, his bright red. The Princess Wilhelmina is sure to prefer you."

"Perhaps so, if she were asked; but she is in the power of her august brother, who will marry her to whom he pleases."

"That must be prevented."

"How?"

"By winning the young lady's affections. Love has so many resources. Every day one sees marriages for money broken off, and replaced by marriages for love."

"Yes, one sees that in plays——"

"Which afford excellent lessons."

"For people of a certain class, but not for princes."

"Why not make the attempt? If I dare advise you, it would be to set out to-morrow and pay a visit to the Prince of Hanau."

"Unnecessary. To see the prince and his sister I need not stir hence. One of these despatches announces their early arrival at Karlstadt. They are on their way hither. On their return from a journey into Prussia, they pass through my territories and pause in my capital, inviting themselves as my guests for two or three days. Their visit is my ruin

What will they think of me when they find me alone, deserted, in my empty palace? Do you suppose the princess will be tempted to share my dismal solitude? Last year she went to Saxe-Tolpelhausen. The elector entertained her well, and made his court agreeable. *He* could place chamberlains and aides-de-camp at her orders, could give concerts, balls, and festivals. But *I*—what can I do? What a humiliation! And, that no affront may be spared to me, my rival proposes negotiating his marriage at my own court. Nothing less, it seems, will satisfy him! He has just sent me an ambassador Baron Pippinstir, deputed, he writes, to conclude a commercial treaty which will be extremely advantageous to me. The treaty is but a pretext. The Baron's true mission is to the Prince of Hanau. The meeting is skillfully contrived, for the secret and unostentatious conclusion of the matrimonial treaty. This is what I am condemned to witness! I must endure this outrage and mortification, and display, before the prince and his sister, my misery and poverty. I would do anything to avoid such shame!"

"Means might, perhaps, be found," said Balthasar, after a moment's reflection.

"Means? Speak, and whatever they be, I adopt them."

"The plan is a bold one!" continued Balthasar, speaking half to the Grand Duke and half to himself, as if pondering and weighing a project.

"No matter! I will risk everything,"

"You would like to conceal your real position, to re-people this palace, to have a court?"

"Yes."

"Do you think the courtiers who have deserted you would return?"

"Never. Did I not tell you they are sold to my enemies?"

"Could you not select others from the higher class of your subjects?"

"Impossible? There are very few gentlemen amongst my subjects. Ah! if a court could be got up at a day's notice! though it were to be composed of the humblest citizens of Karlstadt——"

"I have better than that to offer you."

"You have? And whom do you offer?" cried Duke Leopold, greatly astonished.

"My actors."

"What! you would have me make up a court of your actors?"

"Yes, your Highness, and you could not do better. Observe that my actors are accustomed to play all manner of parts, and that they will be perfectly at their ease when performing those of noblemen and high officials. I answer for their talent, discretion and probity. As soon as your illustrious guests have departed, and you no longer need their services, they shall resign their posts. Bear in mind that you have no other alternative. Time is short, danger at your door, hesitation is destruction.

"But if such a trick were discovered——"

"A mere supposition, a chimerical fear. On the other hand, if you do not run the risk, your ruin is certain."

The Grand Duke was easily persuaded. Careless and easy-going, he yet was not wanting in determination, nor in a certain love of hazardous enterprises. He remembered that fortune is said to favor the bold, and his desperate position increased his courage. With joyful intrepidity he accepted and adopted Balthasar's scheme.

"Bravo," cried the manager; "you shall have no cause to repent. You behold in me a sample of your future courtiers; and since honors and dignities are to be distributed, it is with me, if you please, that we will begin. In this request I act up to the spirit of my part. A courtier should always be asking for something, should lose no opportunity, and should profit by his rival's absence to obtain the best place. I entreat your Highness to have the goodness to name me prime minister."

"Granted!" gaily replied the prince. "Your excellency may immediately enter upon your functions."

"My excellency will not fail to do so, and begins by requesting your signature to a few decrees I am about to draw up. But in the first place, your Highness must be so good as to answer two or three questions, that I may understand the position of affairs. A new-comer in a country, and a novice in a minister's office, has need of instruction. If it became necessary to enforce your commands, have you the means of so doing?"

"Undoubtedly."

"Your Highness has soldiers?"

"A regiment."

"How many men?"

"One hundred and twenty, besides the musicians."

"Are they obedient, devoted?"

"Passive obedience, unbounded devotion; soldiers and officers would die for me to the last man."

"It is their duty. Another question: Have you a prison in your dominions?"

"Certainly."

"I mean a good prison, strong and well guarded, with thick walls, solid bars, stern and incorruptible jailors?"

"I have every reason to believe that the Castle of Zwingenberg combines all those requisites. The fact is, I have made very little use of it: but it was built by a man who understood such matters—by my father's great-grandfather, Rudolph the Inflexible."

"A fine surname for a sovereign! Your inflexible ancestor, I am very sure, never lacked either cash or courtiers. Your Highness has perhaps done wrong to leave the state-prison untenanted. I presume the Castle of Zwingenberg will accommodate a score of prisoners?"

"What! you are going to imprison twenty persons?"

"More or less. I do not know the exact number of the persons who composed your late court. They it is whom I propose lodging within the lofty walls constructed by the inflexible Rudolph. The measure is indispensable."

"But it is illegal!"

"I crave your Highness's pardon; you use a word I do not understand. It seems to me that, in every good German government, that which is absolutely necessary is necessarily legal. That is my policy. Moreover, as prime minister, I am responsible. What would you have more? It is plain that, if we leave your courtiers their liberty, it will be impossible to perform our comedy; they will betray us. Therefore the welfare of the state imperatively demands their imprisonment. Besides, you yourself have said that they are traitors, and therefore they deserve punishment. For your own safety's sake, for the success of your project—which will insure the happiness of your subjects—write the names, sign

the order, and inflict upon the deserters the lenient chastisement of a week's captivity."

The Grand Duke wrote the names and signed several orders, which were forthwith intrusted to the most active and determined officers of the regiment, with instructions to make the arrests at once, and to take their prisoners to the Castle of Zwingenberg at three quarters of a league from Karlstadt.

"All that now remains to be done is to send for your new court," said Balthasar. "Has your Highness carriages?"

"Certainly! a berlin, a barouche, and a cabriolet."

"And horses?"

"Six draught and two saddle."

"I take the barouche, the berlin, and four horses; I go to Krusthal, put my actors up to their parts, and bring them here this evening. We install ourselves in the palace, and shall be at once at your Highness's orders."

"Very good; but, before going, write an answer to Baron Pippinstir, who asks an audience."

"Two lines, very dry and official, putting him off till to-morrow. We must be under arms to receive him. . . . Here is the note written, but how shall I sign it? The name of Balthasar is not very suitable to a German excellency."

"True, you must have another name, and a title; I create you Count Lipandorf."

"Thanks, your Highness. I will bear the title nobly, and restore it to you faithfully, with my seals of office, when the comedy is played out."

Count Lipandorf signed the letter, which Sigismund was ordered to take to Baron Pippinstir; then he started for Krusthal.

Next morning, the Grand Duke Leopold held a levee, which was attended by all the officers of his new court. And as soon as he was dressed he received the ladies with infinite grace and affability.

Ladies and officers were attired in their most elegant theatrical costumes; the Grand Duke appeared greatly satisfied with their bearing and manners. The first compliments over, there came a general distribution of titles and offices.

The lover, Florival, was appointed aide-de-camp to the Grand Duke, colonel of hussars, and Count Reinsberg.

Rigolet, the low comedian, was named grand chamberlain, and Baron Fidibus.

Similor, who performed the valets, was master of the horse and Baron Kockemburg.

Anselmo, walking gentleman, was promoted to be gentleman-in-waiting and Chevalier Grillenfanger.

The leader of the band, Lebel, was appointed superintendent of the music and amusements of the court, with the title of Chevalier Arpeggio.

The prima donna, Miss Delia, was created Countess of Rosenthal, an interesting orphan, whose dowry was to be the hereditary office of first lady of honor to the future Grand Duchess.

Miss Foligny, the singing chamber-maid, was appointed widow of a general and Baroness Allenzau.

Miss Alice, walking lady, became Miss Fidibus, daughter of the chamberlain, and a rich heiress.

Finally, the duenna, Madame Pastorale, was called to the responsible station of mistress of the robes and governess of the maids of honour, under the imposing title of Baroness Schicklick.

The new dignitaries received decorations in proportion to their rank. Count Balthasar von Lipandorf, prime minister, had two stars and three grand crosses. The aide-de-camp, Florival von Reinsberg, fastened five crosses upon the breast of his hussar jacket.

The parts duly distributed and learned, there was a rehearsal, which went off excellently well. The Grand Duke deigned to superintend the getting up of the piece, and to give the actors a few useful hints.

Prince Maximilian of Hanau and his august sister were expected that evening. Time was precious. Pending their arrival, and by way of practising his court, the Grand Duke gave audience to the ambassador from Saxe-Tolpelhausen.

Baron Pippinstir was ushered into the hall of the throne. He had asked permission to present his wife at the same time as his credentials, and that favor had been granted him.

At sight of the diplomatist, the new courtiers, as yet unaccustomed to rigid decorum, had difficulty in keeping their countenances. The baron was a man of fifty, prodigiously tall, singularly thin, abundantly powdered, with legs like hop-

poles, clad in knee breeches and white silk stockings. A long slender pigtail danced upon his flexible back. He had a face like a bird of prey—little round eyes, a receding chin, and an enormous hooked nose. It was scarcely possible to look at him without laughing, especially when one saw him for the first time. His apple-green coat glittered with a profusion of embroidery. His chest being too narrow to admit of a horizontal development of his decorations, he wore them in two columns, extending from his collar to his waist. When he approached the Grand Duke, with a self-satisfied simper and a jaunty air, his sword by his side, his cocked hat under his arm, nothing was wanting to complete the caricature.

The Baroness Pippinstir was a total contrast to her husband. She was a pretty little woman of five-and-twenty, as plump as a partridge, with a lively eye, a nice figure, and an engaging smile. There was mischief in her glance, seduction in her dimples, and the rose's tint upon her cheeks. Her dress was the only ridiculous thing about her. To come to court, the little baroness had put on all the finery she could muster; she sailed into the hall under a cloud of ribbons, sparkling with jewels and fluttering with plumes—the loftiest of which, however, scarcely reached to the shoulder of her lanky spouse.

Completely identifying himself with his part of prime minister, Balthasar, as soon as this oddly-assorted pair appeared, decided upon his plan of campaign. His natural penetration told him the diplomatist's weak point. He felt that the baron, who was old and ugly, must be jealous of his wife, who was young and pretty. He was not mistaken. Pippinstir was as jealous as a tiger-cat. Recently married, the meagre diplomatist had not dared to leave his wife at Saxe-Tolpelhausen, for fear of accidents; he would not lose sight of her, and had brought her to Karlstadt in the arrogant belief that danger vanished in his presence.

After exchanging a few diplomatic phrases with the ambassador, Balthasar took Colonel Florival aside and gave him secret instructions. The dashing officer passed his hand through his richly-curling locks, adjusted his splendid pelisse, and approached Baroness Pippinstir. The ambassadress received him graciously; the handsome colonel had already attracted her attention, and soon she was delighted with his

wit and gallant speeches. Florival did not lack imagination, and his memory was stored with well-turned phrases and sentimental tirades, borrowed from stage-plays. He spoke half from inspiration, half from memory, and he was listened to with favor.

The conversation was carried on in French—for the best of reasons.

“It is the custom here,” said the Grand Duke to the ambassador; “French is the only language spoken in this palace; it is a regulation I had some difficulty in enforcing, and I was at last obliged to decree that a heavy penalty should be paid for every German word spoken by a person attached to my court. That proved effectual, and you will not easily catch any of these ladies and gentlemen tripping. My prime minister, Count Balthasar von Lipandorf, is the only one who is permitted occasionally to speak his native language.”

Balthasar, who had long managed theatres in Alsace and Lorraine, spoke German like a Frankfort brewer.

Meanwhile, Baron Pippinstir's uneasiness was extreme. Whilst his wife conversed in a low voice with the young and fascinating aide-de-camp, the pitiless prime minister held his arm tight, and explained at great length his views with respect to the famous commercial treaty. Caught in his own snare, the unlucky diplomatist was in agony; he fidgeted to get away, his countenance expressed grievous uneasiness, his lean legs were convulsively agitated. But in vain did he endeavor to abridge his torments; the remorseless Balthasar relinquished not his prey.

Sigismund, promoted to be steward of the household, announced dinner. The ambassador and his lady had been invited to dine, as well as all the courtiers. The aide-de-camp was placed next to the baroness, the baron at the other end of the table. The torture was prolonged. Florival continued to whisper soft nonsense to the fair and well-pleased Pippinstir. The diplomatist could not eat.

There was another person present whom Florival's flirtation annoyed, and that person was Delia, Countess of Rosenthal. After dinner, Balthasar, whom nothing escaped, took her aside.

“You know very well,” said the minister, “that he is

only acting a part in a comedy. Should you feel hurt if he declared his love upon the stage to one of your comrades? Here is the same thing; all this is but a play; when the curtain falls, he will return to you."

A courtier announced that the Prince of Hanau and his sister were within a league of Karlstadt. The Grand Duke, attended by Count Reinsberg and some officers, went to meet them. It was dark when the illustrious guests reached the palace; they passed through the great saloon, where the whole court was assembled to receive them, and retired at once to their apartments.

"The game is fairly begun," said the Grand Duke to his prime minister; "and now, may heaven help us!"

"Fear nothing," replied Balthasar. "The glimpse I caught of Prince Maximilian's physiognomy satisfied me that everything will pass off perfectly well, and without exciting the least suspicion. As to Baron Pippinstir, he is already blind with jealousy, and Florival will give him so much to do, that he will have no time to attend to his master's business. Things look well."

Next morning, the Prince and Princess of Hanau were welcomed, on awakening, by a serenade from the regimental band. The weather was beautiful; the Grand Duke proposed an excursion out of town; he was glad of an opportunity to show his guests the best features of his duchy—a delightful country, and many picturesque points of view, much prized and sketched by German landscape-painters. The proposal agreed to, the party set out, in carriages and on horseback, for the old Castle of Rauberzell—magnificent ruins, dating from the middle ages, and famous far and wide.

At a short distance from the castle, which lifted its gray turrets upon the summit of a wooded hill, the Princess Wilhelmina expressed a wish to walk the remainder of the way. Everybody followed her example. The Grand Duke offered her his arm; the prince gave his to the Countess Delia von Rosenthal; and, at a sign from Balthasar, Baroness Pastorale von Schicklick took possession of Baron Pippinstir; whilst the smiling baroness accepted Florival's escort. The young people walked at a brisk pace. The unfortunate baron would gladly have availed himself of his long legs to keep up with his coquettish wife; but the duenna, portly and pon-

derous, hung upon his arm, checked his ardor and detained him in the rear. Respect for the mistress of the robes forbade rebellion or complaint.

Amidst the ruins of the venerable castle the distinguished party found a table spread with an elegant collation. It was an agreeable surprise, and the Grand Duke had all the credit of an idea suggested to him by his prime minister.

The whole day was passed in rambling through the beautiful forest of Raubertzell. The princess was charming; nothing could exceed the high breeding of the courtiers, or the fascination and elegance of the ladies; and Prince Maximilian warmly congratulated the Grand Duke on having a court composed of such agreeable and accomplished persons. Baroness Pippinstir declared, in a moment of enthusiasm, that the court of Saxe-Tolpelhausen was not to compare with that of Nienstein. She could hardly have said anything more completely at variance with the object of her husband's mission. The baron was near fainting.

That evening, at the palace, when conversation began to languish, the Chevalier Arpeggio sat down to the piano, and the Countess Delia von Rosenthal sang an air out of the last new opera. The guests were enchanted with her performance. Prince Maximilian had been extremely attentive to the countess during their excursion; the young actress's grace and beauty had captivated him, and the charm of her voice completed his subjugation. Passionately fond of music, every note she sang went to his very heart. When she had finished one song, he petitioned for another. The amiable prima donna sang a duet with the aide-de-camp Florival von Reinsberg, and then, being further entreated, a trio, in which Similor—master of the horse, baritone, and Baron von Kockemburg—took a part.

Here our actors were at home, and their success was complete. Deviating from his usual reserve, Prince Maximilian did not disguise his delight; and the imprudent little Baroness Pippinstir declared that, with such a beautiful tenor voice, an aide-de-camp might aspire to anything. A cemetery on a wet day is a cheerful sight, compared to the baron's countenance when he heard these words.

Upon the morrow, a hunting-party was the order of the day. In the evening there was a dance. It had been pro-

posed to invite the principal families of the metropolis of Niesenstein, but the prince and princess begged that the circle might not be increased.

"We are four ladies," said the princess, glancing at the prima donna, the singing chambermaid, and the walking lady, "it is enough for a quadrille."

There was no lack of gentlemen. There was the Grand Duke, the aide-de-camp, the grand chamberlain, the master of the horse, the gentleman-in-waiting, and Prince Maximilian's aide-de-camp, Count Darius von Sturmhaube, who appeared greatly smitten by the charms of the widowed Baroness Allenzau.

"I am sorry my court is not more numerous," said the Grand Duke, "but, within the last three days, I have been compelled to diminish it by one-half."

"How so?" inquired Prince Maximilian.

"A dozen courtiers," replied the Grand Duke Leopold, "whom I had loaded with favors, dared conspire against me, in favor of a certain cousin of mine at Vienna. I discovered the plot, and the plotters are now in the dungeons of my good fortress of Zwingenberg."

"Well done!" cried the prince; "I like such energy and vigor. And to think that people taxed you with weakness of character. How we princes are deceived and calumniated."

The Grand Duke cast a grateful glance at Balthasar. That able minister by this time felt himself as much at his ease in his new office as if he had held it all his life; he even began to suspect that the government of a grand duchy is a much easier matter than the management of a company of actors. Incessantly engrossed by his master's interests, he manoeuvred to bring about the marriage which was to give the Grand Duke happiness, wealth, and safety; but, notwithstanding his skill, notwithstanding the torments with which he had filled the jealous soul of Pippinstir, the ambassador devoted the scanty moments of repose his wife left him to furthering the object of his mission. The alliance with Saxe-Tolpelhausen was pleasing to Prince Maximilian; it offered him various advantages: the extinction of an old lawsuit between the two states, the cession of a large extent of territory, and, finally, the commercial treaty, which the perfidious

baron had brought to the court of Niesenstein, with a view of concluding it in favor of the principality of Hanau. Invested with unlimited powers, the diplomatist was ready to insert in the contract almost any conditions. Prince Maximilian chose to dictate to him.

It is necessary here to remark that the Elector of Saxe-Tolpelhausen was desperately in love with the Princess Wilhelmina.

It was evident that the baron would carry the day, if the prime minister did not hit upon some scheme to destroy his credit or force him to retreat. Balthasar, fertile in expedients, was teaching Florival his part in the palace garden, when Prince Maximilian met him, and requested a moment's private conversation.

"I am at your Highness's orders," respectfully replied the minister.

"I will go straight to the point, Count Lipandorf," the Prince began. "I married my late wife, a princess of Hesse-Darmstadt, from political motives. She has left me three sons. I now intend to marry again; but this time I need not sacrifice myself to state considerations, and I am determined to consult my heart alone."

"If your Highness does me the honor to consult me, I have merely to say that you are perfectly justified in acting as you propose. After once sacrificing himself to his people's happiness, a prince has surely a right to think a little of his own."

"Exactly my opinion! Count, I will tell you a secret. I am in love with Miss von Rosenthal."

"Miss Delia?"

"Yes, sir; with Miss Delia, Countess of Rosenthal; and, what is more, I will tell you that I know everything."

"What may it be that your Highness knows?"

"I know who she is."

"Ha!"

"It was a great secret!"

"And how came your Highness to discover it?"

"The Grand Duke revealed it to me."

"I might have guessed as much!"

"He alone could do so, and I rejoice that I addressed myself directly to him. At first, when I questioned him concerning the young countess's family, he ill concealed his

embarrassment. Her position struck me as strange ; young, beautiful, and alone in the world, without relatives or guardians—all that seemed to me singular, if not suspicious. I trembled, as the possibility of an intrigue flashed upon me; but the Grand Duke, to dissipate my unfounded suspicion, told me all."

"And what is your Highness's decision? After such a revelation——"

"It in no way changes my intentions. I shall marry the lady."

"Marry her? But no, your Highness jests."

"Count Lipandorf, I never jest. What is there, then, so strange in my determination? The Grand Duke's father was romantic, and of a roving disposition; in the course of his life he contracted several left-handed alliances—Miss von Rosenthal is the issue of one of those unions. I care not for the illegitimacy of her birth; she is of noble blood of a princely race—that is all I require."

"Yes," replied Balthasar, who had concealed his surprise and kept his countenance, as became an experienced statesman and consummate comedian. "Yes, I now understand; and I think as you do. Your Highness has the talent of bringing everybody over to your way of thinking."

"The greatest piece of good fortune," continued the prince, "is that the mother remained unknown: she is dead, and there is no trace of family on that side."

"As your Highness says, it is very fortunate. And doubtless the Grand Duke is informed of your august intentions with respect to the proposed marriage?"

"No; I have as yet said nothing either to him or to the countess. I reckon upon you, my dear count, to make my offer, to whose acceptance I trust there will not be the slightest obstacle. I give you the rest of the day to arrange everything. I will write to Miss von Rosenthal; I hope to receive from her own lips the assurance of my happiness, and I will beg her to bring me her answer herself, this evening, in the summer-house in the park. Lover-like you see—a rendezvous, a mysterious interview! But come, Count Lipandorf, lose no time; a double tie shall bind me to your sovereign. We will sign, at one and the same time, my marriage-contract and his. On that condition alone will I grant him my sister's

hand; otherwise I treat, this very evening, with the envoy from Saxe-Tolpelhausen."

A quarter of an hour after Prince Maximilian had made this overture, Balthasar and Delia were closeted with the Grand Duke.

What was to be done? The Prince of Hanau was noted for his obstinacy. He would have excellent reasons to oppose to all objections. To confess the deception that had been practised upon him was equivalent to a total and eternal rupture. But, upon the other hand, to leave him in his error, to suffer him to marry an actress! it was a serious matter. If ever he discovered the truth, it would be enough to raise the entire German Confederation against the Grand Duke of Nienstein.

"What is my prime minister's opinion?" asked the Grand Duke.

"A prompt retreat. Delia must instantly quit the town; we will devise an explanation of her sudden departure."

"Yes; and this evening Prince Maximilian will sign his sister's marriage contract with the Elector of Saxe-Tolpelhausen. My opinion is, that we have advanced too far to retreat. If the prince ever discovers the truth, he will be the person most interested to conceal it. Besides, Miss Delia is an orphan—she has neither parents nor family. I adopt her—I acknowledge her as my sister."

"Your Highness's goodness and condescension——" lisped the pretty prima donna.

"You agree with me, do you not, Miss Delia?" continued the Grand Duke. "You are resolved to seize the good fortune thus offered, and to risk the consequences?"

"Yes, your Highness."

The ladies will make allowances for Delia's faithlessness to Florival. How few female heads would not be turned by the prospect of wearing a crown! The heart's voice is sometimes mute in presence of such brilliant temptations. Besides, was not Florival faithless? Who would say whither he might be led in the course of the tender scenes he acted with the Baroness Pippinstir? Prince Maximilian was neither young nor handsome, but he offered a throne. Not only an actress, but many a high-born dame, might possibly, in such circumstance, forget her love, and think only of her ambition.

To her credit be it said, Delia did not yield without some reluctance to the Grand Duke's arguments, which Balthasar backed with all his eloquence; but she ended by agreeing to the interview with Prince Maximilian.

"I accept," she resolutely exclaimed; "I shall be sovereign Princess of Hanau."

"And I," cried the Grand Duke, "shall marry Princess Wilhelmina, and, this very evening, poor Pippinstir, disconcerted and defeated, will go back to Saxe-Tolpelhausen."

"He would have done that in any case," said Balthasar; "for, this evening, Florival was to have run away with his wife."

"That is carrying things rather far," Delia remarked.

"Such a scandal is unnecessary," added the Grand Duke.

Whilst awaiting the hour of her rendezvous with the prince, Delia, pensive and agitated, was walking in the park, when she came suddenly upon Florival, who seemed as much discomposed as herself. In spite of her newly-born ideas of grandeur, she felt a pain at her heart. With a forced smile, and in a tone of irony, she greeted her former lover.

"A pleasant journey to you, Colonel Florival," she said.

"I may wish you the same," replied Florival; "for doubtless you will soon set out for the principality of Hanau!"

"Before long, no doubt."

"You admit it, then?"

"Where is the harm? The wife must follow her husband—a princess must reign in her dominions."

"Princess! What do you mean? Wife! In what ridiculous promises have they induced you to confide?"

Florival's offensive doubts were dissipated by the formal explanation which Delia took malicious pleasure in giving him. A touching scene ensued; the lovers, who had both gone astray for a moment, felt their former flame burn all the more ardently for its partial and temporary extinction. Pardon was mutually asked and granted, and ambitious dreams fled before a burst of affection.

"You shall see whether I love you or not," said Florival to Delia. "Yonder comes Baron Pippinstir; I will take him into the summer-house; a closet is there where you can hide yourself to hear what passes, and then you shall decide my fate."

Delia went into the summer-house, and hid herself in the closet. There she overheard the following conversation:

"What have you to say to me, Colonel?" asked the baron.

"I wish to speak to your excellency of an affair that deeply concerns you."

"I am all attention; but I beg you to be brief; I am expected elsewhere."

"So am I."

"I must go to the prime minister, to return him this draught of a commercial treaty, which I cannot accept."

"And I must go to the rendezvous given me in this letter."

"The baroness's writing!"

"Yes, baron. Your wife has done me the honor to write to me. We set out together to-night; the baroness is waiting for me in a post-chaise."

"And it is to me you dare acknowledge this abominable project?"

"I am less generous than you think. You cannot but be aware that, owing to an irregularity in your marriage-contract, nothing would be easier than to get it annulled. This we will have done; we then obtain a divorce, and I marry the baroness. You will, of course, have to hand me over her dowry—a million of florins—composing, if I do not mistake, your entire fortune."

The baron, more dead than alive, sank into an arm-chair. He was struck speechless.

"We might, perhaps make some arrangement, baron," continued Florival. "I am not particularly bent upon becoming your wife's second husband."

"Ah, sir!" cried the ambassador, "you restore me to life!"

"Yes, but I do not restore you the baroness, except on certain conditions."

"Speak! What do you demand?"

"First, that treaty of commerce, which you must sign just as Count Lipandorf has drawn it up."

"I consent to do so."

"That is not all; you shall take my place at the rendezvous, get into the post-chaise, and run away with your wife;

but first you must sit down at this table and write a letter, in due diplomatic form, to Prince Maximilian, informing him that, finding it impossible to accept his stipulations, you are compelled to decline, in your sovereign's name, the honor of his august alliance."

"But, colonel, remember that my instructions——"

"Very well, fulfil them exactly; be a dutiful ambassador and a miserable husband, ruined, without wife and without dowry. You will never have such another chance, baron! A pretty wife and a million of florins do not fall to a man's lot twice in his life. But I must take my leave of you. I am keeping the baroness waiting."

"I will go to her. . . . Give me paper, a pen, and be so good as to dictate. I am so agitated——"

The baron really was in a dreadful fluster. The letter written, and the treaty signed, Florival told his excellency where he could find the post-chaise.

"One thing more you must promise me," said the young man, "and that is, that you will behave like a gentleman to your wife, and not scold her over-much. Remember the flaw in the contract. She may find somebody else in whose favor to cancel the document. Suitors will not be wanting."

"What need of a promise?" replied the poor baron. "You know very well that my wife does what she likes with me. I shall have to explain my conduct, and ask her pardon."

Pippinstir departed. Delia left her hiding-place, and held out her hand to Florival.

"You have behaved well," she said.

"That is more than the baroness will say."

"She deserves the lesson. It is your turn to go into the closet and listen; the prince will be here directly."

"I hear his footsteps." And Florival was quickly concealed.

"Charming countess!" said the prince on entering. "I have come to know my fate."

"What does your Highness mean?" said Delia, pretending not to understand him.

"How can you ask? Has not the Grand Duke spoken to you?"

"No, your Highness."

"Nor the prime minister?"

"Not a word. When I received your letter, I was on the point of asking you for a private interview. I have a favor—a service—to implore of your Highness."

"It is granted before it is asked. I place my whole influence and power at your feet, charming countess."

"A thousand thanks, illustrious prince. You have already shown me so much kindness, that I venture to ask you to make a communication to my brother, the Grand Duke, which I dare not make myself. I want you to inform him that I have been privately married to Count Reinsberg."

"Good heavens!" cried Maximilian, falling into the arm-chair in which Pippinstir had recently reclined. On recovering from the shock, the prince rose again to his feet.

"'Tis well, madam," he said, in a faint voice. "'Tis well!"

And he left the summer-house.

After reading Baron Pippinstir's letter, Prince Maximilian fell a-thinking. It was not the Grand Duke's fault if the Countess of Rosenthal did not ascend the throne of Hanau. There was an insurmountable obstacle. Then the precipitate departure of the ambassador of Saxe-Tolpelhausen was an affront which demanded instant vengeance. And the Grand Duke Leopold was a most estimable sovereign, skillful, energetic, and blessed with wise councillors. These various motives duly weighed, the prince made up his mind, and next day was signed the marriage-contract of the Grand Duke of Niesenstein and the Princess Wilhelmina of Hanau.

Three days later the marriage itself was celebrated.

The play was played out.

The actors had performed their parts with wit, intelligence, and a noble disinterestedness. They took their leave of the Grand Duke, leaving him with a rich and pretty wife, a powerful brother-in-law, a serviceable alliance, and a commercial treaty which could not fail to replenish his treasury.

Embassies, special missions, banishment, were alleged to the Grand Duchess as the causes of their departure. Then an amnesty was published on the occasion of the marriage; the gates of the fortress of Zwingenberg opened, and the former courtiers resumed their respective posts.

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THE STAMPEDE*

BY R. L. KETCHUM

Over the hills from the north comes the great herd of Texas cattle hurrying, crowding—impatient to reach the water they have not tasted for several days. First a few, with noses lifted high to scent any near-by stream; then, in bunches of scores and hundreds; finally the thousands of tired, thirsty beasts pour like a living sea down from the hills to the open plain.

Before them stretches, east and west, to the horizon on

*A stirring description of a Western scene. Written and illustrated for Short Stories. Copyrighted.

either side, a straight, glittering, double band of steel, and down the track to the east a black speck appears, sending up a curling cloud of smoke.

The leaders sniff and paw, then leap the strange, shining barrier, and hurry on. The others follow—slowly, at first, then rapidly, all leaping high in air. Only a few, the young, unruly ones, remain behind, pawing and stamping impatiently. These the cowboys, with hoarse yells and curses, urge on. The coming train is close at hand, and the young cattle, seeing it, are mad with fear, and the drivers, excited, redouble their efforts to hurry them across the track. At last the beasts start, and just before the train whizzes by, the last one crosses.

But they do not stop when they reach the herd. Full of fear and excitement, they press upon their fellows in the rear, causing the herd to close up, at first; then, as the cattle in front, pushed on by the frightened ones behind, imbibe the feeling of danger, they begin to hasten. Faster—faster—and suddenly, the whole great mass, frantic with excitement, breaks into a terrific pace which nothing can check, and which increases in speed every instant.

A cowboy, in front, tries to spur out of the way, but is trampled. A little sod hut stands alone in the track of the mass of insane brutes, and is ground to dust.

A few miles to the southward, three or four white tents, pitched on the bank of a willow-fringed stream—shallow and sparkling—gleam in the rays of the evening sun. A few women and girls are gathered around a fire, cooking supper, and several men appear, laden with fish and game. Two little children mud-soiled and happy, are playing in the shallow creek. The sky is clear, but there is a sound of thunder to the northward.

One of the men hears it, as they reach the tents, and they all stand listening.

The dull, heavy, booming sound grows louder, and presently, from a range of hills a mile distant, a cloud of yellow dust rises high.

Then, with a roar like the clash of two great armies, the wall of death surges over the plain, and down—down into the happy valley.

Where the little stream flowed, a sluggish, irregular band of yellow mud relieves the dreary monotony of the prairie. Where the white tents stood is nothing—nothing but dust, trampled and ground by the thousands of cruel hoofs.

THE WILD LORD OF THE MANOR*

FROM THE RUSSIAN OF CHTCHÉDRINE.

There was once an empire. In this empire there lived a pomèchtchik (Lord of the Manor).

Now, this pomèchtchik led a happy life. He had everything he desired; lands, corn, cattle, gardens, laborers. Nevertheless, he was a stupid creature whose whole intellectual nourishment consisted in reading "The Moniteur of Pomèchtchikal Interests." As to his natural constitution, he had a lymphatic temperament and a white skin.

One day he began to importune Divine Goodness. "Oh Lord," he cried, "you have given me everything in abundance, you have showered blessings upon me! Nevertheless, you have allowed my heart to be saddened by an affliction I am not in a condition to endure; my country is infested with moujiks (peasants). Oh Lord, deliver me from this plague!"



The Lord, in His Omniscience, was well aware that this pomèchtchik was stupid. Therefore the prayer remained unanswered. Our pomèchtchik saw that the race of moujiks, far from diminishing, steadily increased every day. He saw, and was haunted by the fear that finally the moujiks would devour all his goods. In his anxiety he scanned the pages of The Moniteur of Pomèchtchikal Interests, to see if he

*This odd story is translated by Mrs. William Sharp and illustrated for Short Stories. Copyrighted.

could not find some indication of what he should do under such circumstances. He found these words, "Action, action."

"That is but one simple word," said the stupid pomèchtchik, "but it is of gold," and he began to act, not according to caprice, but according to required forms. If, for instance, a chicken, belonging to a moujik, began to peck at the hay he laid hold of it with due form and put it into the pot.

If a moujik cut wood by stealth in the wood of the pomèchtchik, and prepared to carry it away, the said cut wood was immediately carried to the manor house, and a fine was levied upon the said moujik—always according to the forms.

"Henceforth I shall resort to fines," said the pomèchtchik; "the moujiks understand it best." These latter, however, realized that their pomèchtchik was a cunning man in spite of his stupidity. He spied upon them so effectually that they were unable to lay their fingers upon anything. They couldn't move without stumbling upon a prohibition; here, there, and everywhere. If the cattle went to the trough the pomèchtchik cried out, "It is my water." If any fowl escaped from the court-yard and walked about in the vicinity of his house, the pomèchtchik would exclaim, "It is my land."

Earth, water, air, all had become his property. The moujik had no longer a shaving with which to light up his hut, nor the smallest scrap of a twig with which to sweep it clean.

Then it came to pass that the moujiks, reduced to despair, prostrated themselves in prayer before God. "O, Lord!" they said, "rather than allow us to endure such sufferings all our lives, cause us to disappear with our children and our grandchildren."

God, in his mercy, was touched by their despair and their tears. He answered their prayer, and after a short time there did not remain a single moujik throughout the length and breadth of the domains of the stupid pomèchtchik.

What had become of them? No one knew. Only, a sort of whirlwind had suddenly been seen in the air—similar to whirling chaff in a grange when corn is threshed. Some had thought they could distinguish the moujiks in the black cloud, that was carried away with great rapidity. Meanwhile

the pomèchtchik, when taking the air on his balcony, affirmed that the atmosphere of his domains had become delightfully pure. He was delighted and said to himself, "Now I can dispose my precious person quite quietly to slumber." He

began to live very much at his ease, and he dreamed of methods whereby he might charm his soul while resting his body.

"I will set up a theatre here; I will write to the actor Sadovski, 'Come, I beg of

you, come my friend, and bring some actresses with you."

The actor Sadovski accepted this invitation. He came himself and brought actresses with him; but he had scarcely arrived when he perceived that the pomèchtchikal dwelling was deserted, that there was no one to set up the theatre, raise the curtain or do any work; for the moujiks who had done the work of the house had disappeared with the others.

"Where have you hidden your moujiks?" asked Sadovski.

"This is what has happened: God, in answer to my prayer, has thought fit to rid my domains of that encumbrance."

"But, my friend, you are a fool. Who will henceforth bring you what is necessary for washing yourself?"

"I have already passed several days without washing."

"Oh, you are waiting till you will be able to grow mushrooms on your face!" said Sadovski; and with this sarcasm he left as he had come, in company with the actresses.

Our pomèchtchik recalled to mind that among his neighbors were four generals with whom he had social relations.

"I am tired of playing cards all by myself," he said to himself, "I have had enough of solitaire. I will try to organize a card party with the four generals."

No sooner said than done. He wrote four invitations for a fixed date and sent them out.

These four generals, although they were full-blown gen-

erals, were nevertheless socially on the shelf; therefore they came promptly at the call.

At the very outset, they could not refrain from admiring the purity of the atmosphere which pervaded the domains of the pomèchtchik. "If the atmosphere is so pure," said this latter, holding his head very high, "it is because God, at my request, has rid my lands of all moujiks."

"How admirable!" chorused the generals, showering praises upon him. "Hence, for the future, the sweet air will no longer be contaminated with the pestilential odor of the moujiks."

"Never again!" answered the pomèchtchik; and the party sat down at the card tables. One game was played, and then a revenge game followed. Finally the generals felt that the hour was approaching at which they were accustomed to drink brandy and water. They began to fidget and to look to the right and to the left.

"Doubtless it is time to drink a small glass and to eat a morsel, messieurs les generaux?" asked the pomèchtchik.

"We cannot refuse your kindness!"

Our host left the card table and went to the dining-room cupboard and brought back with him a piece of sugar candy and a gingerbread cake for each general.

"What on earth is this?" asked the four generals, opening their eyes in amazement.

"A light repast. I offer what I have."

"But we ought to have some sort of roast meat!"

"But, my dear generals, I have none to offer you; for, since God did me the favor of delivering me from the moujiks, there has been no fire lighted in my kitchen."

The generals thereupon fell into such a rage that their teeth chattered together.

"But you yourself cannot be without something to eat at your meals?" they objected energetically.

"I feed upon the first raw morsel that falls into my hand. But taste these cakes!"

"Man, you are nothing but a fool!" exclaimed the generals, and, refusing to sit down again to play at cards, each returned to his own home.

Thus our pomèchtchik for a second time is pronounced a fool. It made him reflect for a moment, then the cards on the table attracted his attention, —and he recommenced his daily solitaire, and entered upon a political discussion with imaginary adversaries.

"We shall see, Gentlemen of the Liberal Party, who will gain the day!" he cried. "I will show you how far true strength of character will carry a man." Meanwhile he dealt the cards and began to play the game of "patience" known as "The Ladies' Caprice," saying that if he succeeded three times consecutively, it would mean that he ought to continue his present method; and, as though Fate were acting with design, three times he succeeded with "The Ladies' Caprice." He doubted no longer.

"Since Fate wills it," he said to himself, "I must continue my plan. Meanwhile I have had enough of "patience." Let's move about a little and try to find some sort of occupation."

He sauntered through the rooms; then, having perambulated about for some time, he sat down and continued seated, constantly thinking. He thought of the machine he would have brought from England, so that everything should be accomplished in his place by steam, and only by steam, in such a way that the brawny arm of the moujik might be wholly dispensed with, for he preferred the smell of machinery to the detested odor which emanated from the moujik. He thought

of the splendid kitchen and fruit garden which he would have. What pears, plums, peaches, nuts he calculated he would gather! He instinctively looked through the window, and, oh wonders! all his imaginings were already transformed into realities. By the will of a magical power the pear trees, the apricot trees, the peach trees seemed to break beneath the weight of innumerable fruit. It was merely necessary to gather them by means of these English machines and to put them into his mouth. He thought also of the cows he expected to raise. What cows! Neither skin, nor meat! Nothing but milk! Rivers of milk! He thought of the marvellous strawberries he would plant, all doubles and triples! Weighty strawberries! Only five strawberries in the pound!

He dreamed of the great quantities of these berries he would sell in Moscow. At last, tired of thinking, he wanted to look at himself in the mirror, but a thick covering of dust already lay over it.

"Senka!" he cried, forgetting that he had no longer any one in his service; but he immediately continued, "I must not yield. I must show all those Liberals what a strong mind is capable of." He passed his time doing nothing till nightfall, and then he went to bed. In sleep his dreams were still more delightful than his waking reveries. He dreamed that the governor of the province, in his own person had, having heard of this pomèchtchikal immutability, inquired of the Ispravnik, the head of the district police, "But who is this man of brains, who is such a marked figure in your district?" And then he dreamed that as recompense for his immutability, he had been chosen as minister by his sovereign, that his breast was covered with decorations, and that he issued circulars beginning after this manner: "Firmness! No concessions!"

"Senka!" he cried, without reflection, on awakening again. But the memory of the reality returned immediately to him, and for a moment he drooped his head.

"How shall I occupy myself?" he asked himself. "If only the devil would send me some sort of man-wolf! That would be better than nothing!"

These words had hardly passed through his brain, when the Chief Ispravnik arrived. The stupid pomèchtchik felt an inexpressible joy at seeing him. He ran to the cupboard and took out two little cakes of gingerbread, saying to himself: "At least, this good man will raise no objections."

"Will you have the goodness to explain to me, Monsieur le Pomèchtchik," said the Ispravnik, "by what miracle your moujiks all disappeared?"

"This is what happened: God, in fulfilment of the prayer I addressed to him, was graciously pleased to purge my domains of all the moujiks."

"Very good, monsieur; but who, in the future, will pay their taxes?"

"Their taxes? why, they themselves. It is their most sacred duty; it is their most binding obligation."

"Very good; but by what method are their taxes to be recovered from them, now that, thanks to your prayer, they have all disappeared?"

"But I am sure I don't know. As for me, I cannot pay for them."

"But do you know, Monsieur, that the general treasury cannot exist without taxes and contributions, and particularly without the duties on salt and wine?"

"Very well, I consent. I am willing to pay for a small glass of brandy."

"And do you know that through your fault we no longer find anything to buy at our market, not a piece of meat, nor a pound of bread?" Do you know what that will bring down upon you?"

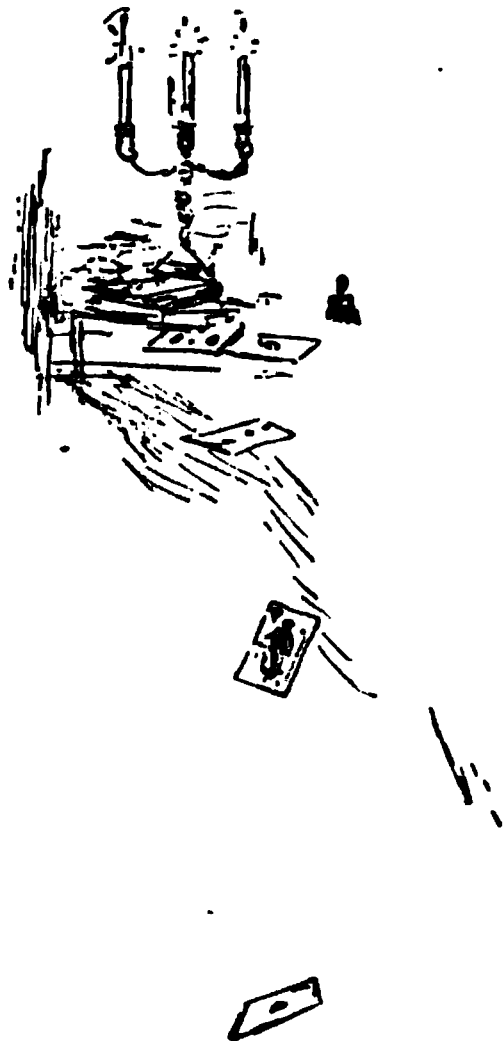
"Allow me! I am ready to make a sacrifice in what really concerns me. Here are two whole cakes of gingerbread."

"You are an imbecile, Monsieur le Pomèchtchik," said the Ispravnik, and turned his back on him and left without throwing even a glance on the cakes.

This time the pomèchtchik began to reflect seriously. This was the third time he had been treated as an imbecile, the third time that a visit to him had been terminated with contempt for him, and that he was left alone.

Could it really be possible that he was an imbecile? Could it be possible that this immutability, of which he was so proud, was, if called by its real name, stupidity and imbecility? Was it possible that the result of this immutability was to cause the taxes and contributions to cease being paid, and that the market was provided with not even a piece of meat nor the smallest pound of flour?

But, as our hero was stupid, for a moment he was enchanted with the excellent farce which he had played; but he instantly remembered the words of the Ispravnik, "Do you know what it will bring down upon you?" and he had no longer any desire to laugh. As was his habit, he began to pace up and down his rooms, and he said repeatedly to himself, "What will it bring down on me? Will it be some imprisonment, perhaps at Tcheboksari or at Varnavine? Even if it were at Tcheboksari, well, people would at least see what real force of character means." But deep down in his heart he said, "Who knows? Perhaps at Tcheboksari I shall have the delight of seeing my dearly beloved moujiks again."



He came and went, sat down, and got up again. Where ever he approached he seemed to hear, "Monsieur le Pomèchtchik, you are an imbecile."

Suddenly he saw a little mouse run across the room and steal towards the cards with which he had played patience, and, indeed, the cards were greasy enough to tempt the appetite of the mouse.

He walked to the little mouse, making a clatter in order to frighten it, but the little mouse was cunning, and realized that without seeking aid no harm would befall it. It contented itself with wagging its tail in answer to his threats, and it even stopped a moment under the sofa and looked up at the pomèchtchik, as though to say to him: "Just wait a little, stupid pomèchtchik. I shall not stop at eating your cards. I will also eat your dressing-gown when you have made it sufficiently greasy."



After a time, the lord of the manor saw that ugly weeds were growing along the walks of his garden. Next that serpents and reptiles of all sorts wriggled through the bushes, and that wild animals were strolling about his park as if they were quite at home. One day, a bear even prowled up to the manor house and sat down upon its haunches, and while licking its hips, looked speculatively at the pomèchtchik. "Senka!" cried the pomèchtchik; but he recollected the real state of matters, and burst into helpless tears.



Nevertheless his firmness did not desert him even then. More than once he was on the point of giving in; but the moment he felt his heart sickening, he would refer to the "Moniteur of Pomèchtchikal Interests," and would immediately be as bronze once more. "No," he cried, "it would be better that I became a savage; it would be better that I should wander in the forest for the future, in the company of wild beasts. At least, no one could then say that a Russian gentleman, that Prince Ourousskoutchoum Kildibaleff had deviated from the true principles!"



And he degenerated into a savage.

It was the middle of Autumn. The frosts were hard; but the pomèchtchik no longer felt the cold, for his body was completely covered with hair. Thus, Esau, according to the Scriptures, was covered with a mantle of fur. His nails became as hard as iron. He commenced walking on all fours, and he was amazed that he had not discovered before that this was much the easiest and pleasantest way of walking. Before long he lost the faculty of pronouncing articulate words, and he made use of a certain sharp cry which was something between a whistle, a croak and a roar.

In a word, he was a wild beast in all save a tail.

He wandered towards his park where previously he had

walked with his dapper person and his white skin. He climbed to the top of a tree and set to sharpening his claws. Away below him he saw something move. It was a hare running. The hare stopped and cocked its ears to listen to the sounds of the forest. It heard nothing that was to it a danger signal, but in an instant the pomèchtchik was down upon it like an arrow, seized it, tore it in pieces with his claws, and ate it, bones and skin included. In leading such a life the pomèchtchik grew exceedingly strong. It was at this juncture that he saw no objection to offer friendly overtures to the bear who had formerly considered him through the window.



"If you are willing, Michel Ivanitch," he said to the bear, "we will hunt for hares together."

"I am willing," answered the bear, with a sullen look. "but brother, you were wrong to cause the disappearance of your moujiks."

"Pray, why?"

"Because it is pleasanter to eat moujiks than to murder gentlemen. Therefore, I tell you without hesitating, that you are an imbecile, although you are my friend."

Meanwhile the Chief Ispravnik, in spite of being a Protector of Pomèchtchiks, did not dare to keep silence concerning the grave disappearance of the moujiks. He made a report to government. The superior authorities were agitated. In the answer thereto, the following questions were asked: "Who will pay the taxes in future? Who will drink the wine in the inns? Who will fulfil the peaceful and useful work of the fields? Give us your personal opinion on these subjects."

The Chief Ispravnik answered that as concerning the taxes, fiscal operations had become objectless; that it would be better to suppress the general treasury. Of useful works there was no longer question. They were replaced by pillage, thefts at armed hands, and assassinations. Even a few days previously a kind of wild beast, half bear, half man, had nearly strangled him, him the Ispravnik, and he had grave

suspicious that the said man-bear was no other than the stupid pomèchtchik, the author of all these said evils.

The high government functionaries were disgusted. A council was called, and the following were the decisions arrived at. On the one hand to institute a general battle in order to seize the band of moujiks. On the other hand to accost the stupid pomèchtchik, the author of all these evils, with the greatest circumspection, and endeavor to suggest to him, with the most delicate hints, the propriety of putting an end to his extravagances, and no longer to create obstacles in the way of the taxes flowing into the treasury.

By one of those fortuitous coincidents which sometimes happen so that they may seem to have been brought about by special design, the high authorities had scarcely made these decisions than a humming mass of moujiks were seen to fly over the town and to fall down on the market-place.

Then there spread throughout that region a smell of bad bread and mutton skins; but at the same time flour and meat of all sorts reappeared in the market, and one day there came such a quantity of taxes that the receiver cried out, clapping his hands: "Where have you got all this from, rascals?"



"But what has meanwhile become of our pomèchtchik?" my readers will ask.

The following are the news which I am in a position to give: He was caught, but with great trouble. As soon as he was caught he was washed, his nose blown, his nails cut. Next, the Chief Ispravnik executed the orders he had received, delicately to insinuate the good idea that he should keep himself quiet.

The Ispravnik completed his work by confiscating the Moniteur of Pomèchtchikal Interests. After which, having confided the pomèchtchik to the charge of Senka, he left.

Our pomèchtchik is still alive. He occupies himself as heretofore, playing games of solitaire. He always regrets his life in the woods. He only washes himself when constrained to do so, and from time to time he gives utterance to the cries of a wild beast.

BINGHAM'S IDEA*

BY E. L. PHILLIMORE

Bingham and I have always been great chums. He is the sort of fellow that can drop in and smoke a pipe for an hour and a half without speaking a word.

Whenever I have complimented Bingham on his powers of silence, he says that he sees no good in talking unless he has something to say, and as he never has, he is not going to bother to make up lies for my amusement.

He had been smoking like a chimney one evening in my room for three-quarters of an hour in utter silence. Suddenly he moved slightly, put his feet on the mantelpiece, and said abruptly:

"Goranidea."

I never can understand Bingham when he speaks with his mouth full of pipe, so I said:

"What?"

"I have got an idea," said Bingham, taking his pipe from between his teeth, and speaking with painstaking distinctness.

Now Bingham has so seldom an idea that I fairly gasped. In order to thoroughly do justice to anything he might be going to say, I cleared away all my papers, pulled round an easy-chair to the fire, and got out a cigar. Then I said:

"Fire away."

He was some time getting his idea into focus, but he started at last.

"Where are you going for your Summer holiday?"

"Don't know," I replied, tersely. "I never fly in the face of Providence by settling where I shall be in August when the snows of Winter are still around me."

Bingham smiled in a superior manner. He has a supreme belief that the world and all that therein is was manufactured for his own express edification, and that nothing will ever interfere to stop his pleasure plans. So he said without further parley:

*An amusing story selected from Temple Bar.

"I am going to buy a house in some jolly little country place, and you are coming with me to share expenses."

Bingham is not a rich man, so I knew his "house" would be some abominable little thatched cottage with holes in the roof, and brick floor, and windows that wouldn't open, and doors that wouldn't shut, and jessamine climbing all over the place. I'd heard that idea of Bingham's before, and I didn't think much of it; so I merely said:

"No, Bingham; you've tried that on several times."

But Bingham was hurt, and began to treat the subject so seriously that I was quite surprised. He unfolded his plans most eloquently, and I found that what was expected of me was this:

He wished to buy (or rather he would prefer me to buy) a Patent Fire-Stove-Water-Proof-Roofed Bungalow—a new invention that he had just seen advertised, and at the end of an hour's animated talk I understood this about it:

It appeared to be built of cards, which could easily be taken to pieces (if the situation primarily chosen did not suit the health of the owner), and carried about in one's great-coat pocket. These cards were so constructed that "neither heat, nor frost, nor thunder," had the least effect upon them. As well as being water-proof they were fire-proof. Bingham enlarged on this last fact tremendously; he said people were so apt to be careless about fire. Now in the case of the bungalows you could scatter hot cinders all over the roof without doing more damage than raising a faint blister on the surface. He laid great stress on the advantages accruing from this. I said that I didn't think I should often want to throw hot cinders all over the roof myself; but Bingham evidently meant to spend all his spare time that way.

I said the whole thing sounded rather uncanny, and I'd like to know a little more about it before I ended my days in a cardboard bungalow. I added that if all his statements proved true I would buy one on the spot.

I asked him how much they cost, and he said he thought a hundred-pound thing would do for us. It would always be ours, and we could move it about wherever we liked. The best place to choose was some nice sheltered spot where man's foot never trod. He wanted quiet this Summer. I asked him how we should get water, and he said:

"From the roof."

I asked if we should have to climb up to the roof on a ladder with a saucepan in one hand and a ladle in the other every time we wanted to boil an egg. I merely asked for information, but he was angry about it; and when I further inquired what would happen provided the windows of heaven remained shut for a season, he became sulky, and suggested that we'd better water it with a garden hose.

I couldn't get any more out of him after this. He said I was fooling him, and went off in a huff; but he relented next night, and brought round an attractive drawing of one of the bungalows to show me.

Bingham can draw better than he can talk, and when I saw the sketch I consented to consider the matter, provided my inquiries in the right quarter proved satisfactory.

I found that Bingham had spoken the truth, though in a distorted form. I confess that the bungalows looked, to me, uncommonly jolly little places, and I went out of the Fire-Stove-Water-Roof-Proofing offices with the remark that if I could find a suitable place to pitch one of these bungalows in I would buy one.

It was more difficult choosing the "suitable place" than I had ever, even in my wildest dreams, anticipated. Bingham was so pig-headed! I never knew before how unreasonable and capricious he was. He insisted upon Yorkshire being the spot chosen; he said he wanted bracing air, and he knew that a Yorkshire moor was the best place for ozone. Bracing air doesn't agree with me, and Bingham knows it, so I considered it abominably selfish of him to be so positive that Devonshire would ruin his constitution forever. I am fond of Bingham in a way, and when he pictured the awful effects that relaxing air had on him, I gave way, and let him have his Yorkshire moor. So we went up together one day and hired a piece of the flattest land we could find. Bingham wanted to live in a peat-bog. He said he'd heard it was healthy, and it would be handy for fires, and very economical; but I didn't want to be removed to another sphere quite so soon, so I insisted on a commonplace looking field. It was a pretty dreary spot, but it wasn't more than six miles from a post-office, and there was a little brook, "running tinkling by," as Bingham poetically expressed it, about a

hundred yards off. He was madly in love with the whole scheme, and was absurdly enthusiastic. He said he thought we should have a bully time there, and he was going to bring heaps of books in case it ever rained.

Well, I bought the bungalow, and the Company stuck it up for us. I didn't see it was so remarkably cheap myself after all; but Bingham said it was; and as he didn't pay anything towards the bill, he was an unprejudiced person, and ought to know. I bought the thing in April, because Bingham said we'd want plenty of time to hunt about for furniture; and he went up once a week from town to the bungalow with some "little thing" he had picked up. He asked if I would put the furnishing into his hands, and I said yes, provided that I drew out the list. He agreed to this, and one evening we met to discuss the matter. Bingham came in jubilant, with a list all ready prepared, in case I didn't really care to bother about it. He said, gratefully, that he would do anything in the world to take trouble off my shoulders. I looked at his list. The total struck me as pleasantly cheap, considering that we had three bedrooms, a large sitting-room, and a kitchen to furnish. Bingham had done it all for £30 13s. 6d.

I subjoin his idea of what was necessary. It amused me at the time, I remember. He began with the servant's room. We were going to take with us a humble friend of his to act as *cordons bleu* and *valet de chambre*, a man who had served in the regiment in which Bingham had been a captain in those palmy, far-off days when he had been one of Britain's noblest soldiers. His name was Jeremiah Sneade, and he was supposed to be contented with the following cheap articles of furniture:

Servant's Room.

	£	s.	d.
1 bedstead	0	7	6
1 chair	0	2	0
	<hr/>		
	£0	9	6
	<hr/>		

I asked Bingham whether Sneade wouldn't want a washhand-stand, but the noble captain said he should like to know what was the use of our pitching the bungalow near a brook if it didn't save us anything? Then I suggested a mattress. Bingham quashed this idea at once. He said soldiers could

put up with anything, and Sneade had never slept on a mattress in his life. A truckle bed and a second-hand blanket were all that he required. He admitted having forgotten the blanket, and he didn't quite remember what the price would be. Still, he would leave a handsome margin, and say two shillings.

So Bingham's amended list stood thus:

	£	s.	d.
1 bedstead	0	7	6
1 chair	0	2	0
1 blanket	0	2	0
	<hr/>		
	£0	11	6
	<hr/>		

I said I thought the room would look rather mean, but I passed on to the next.

Bingham's Room.

	£	s.	d.
1 bedstead	1	0	0
2 chairs	0	10	0
1 arm-chair	1	0	0
1 lounge	1	0	0
1 washhand-stand, &c.	1	0	0
1 bath	1	0	0
4 rugs	2	0	0
1 wardrobe	1	0	0
1 dressing-table	1	0	0
1 mattress	0	10	0
Curtains, ornaments, etc.	2	0	0
	<hr/>		
	£12	0	0
	<hr/>		

I thought Bingham a little extravagant here, but when I said so, he carefully explained that he would always turn out of his room if I wanted anyone else to stay with me, and that therefore it counted as a spare room.

"I've put your room next," he added. "Of course you can make any alteration you like, but I think you'll find I've consulted your tastes pretty well. I know you like things as simple as they can be, and I remember your old distaste for knick-knacks." I thanked him, and proceeded with some curiosity:

My Room.

	£	s.	d.
1 bedstead	1	0	0
1 mattress	0	10	0
1 washhand-stand, &c.	1	0	0
1 bath	1	0	0
2 chairs	0	10	0

(“I know you hate lolling about, old fellow, so I’ve missed out the arm-chair and the lounge,” said Bingham, who was reading over my shoulder; “and I haven’t put any rugs and curtains and things, because I’ve often heard you say you consider that sort of thing unhealthy. I don’t care about them myself, but of course in a spare room one must have things decent.”)

	£	s.	d.
1 dressing-table	1	0	0
1 mirror	0	10	0
	<hr/>		
	£5	10	0

I asked why I was not allowed a wardrobe, and Bingham answered that he thought I wanted to do things on the cheap, so he had arranged for nails to be stuck into the framework of the building for the reception of my garments. I said I didn’t think it looked well to have shirts and neckties hanging all round the room, and he consented to add an inexpensive chest of drawers, though with a grudging expression of countenance.

Then we passed on to the dining-room, or rather the

Living Room.

	£	s.	d.
1 deal table	0	10	0
1 cloth	0	10	0
4 chairs	1	0	0
2 arm-chairs	1	0	0
2 sofas	2	0	0
2 ash-trays	0	2	0
1 sideboard	1	0	0
4 rugs	1	0	0
Book-shelves	0	5	0
4 small tables	1	0	0
	<hr/>		
	£8	7	0

I asked him if he thought I could afford a sofa a-piece, and he replied that it would never do to stick at such a trifle as that. He said we might both come home weary from a day’s fishing in the brook, and make for *the* sofa, and unpleasantness might ensue.

Kitchen.

	£	s.	d.
1 pail	0	2	0
1 fire-irons	0	5	0
1 saucepan	0	1	0
1 frying-pan	0	2	0
1 kitchen range	3	0	0

carry weight with him. Bingham is the idlest fellow on the face of the earth, although he flatters himself he is energy personified.

Well, the bungalow was furnished at a cost of £90 odd. I didn't let Bingham see the bill. I told him it came to a few shillings more than the list he had drawn out, but I thought we should find it more comfortable on the whole.

It really did look very nice when we went down for our real holiday. It was bright and pretty and clean-looking, and Sneade had got a snug little supper for us. Bingham wanted to unpack directly afterwards. I knew it would take him about a month to undo all the luggage he had brought with him, so I didn't interfere. I lit a pipe and stretched myself on *the* sofa, while the wretched little fox-terrier pup Bingham had insisted on bringing with him sniffed doubtfully round the place. Bingham came in again in about five minutes. I thought something was up, because I heard him using such awful language. The bungalow walls are rather thin.

He told me he had forgotten his keys, and how was he to get his boxes open he should like to know? He was awfully injured about it, and I felt I was to blame somehow. I lent him my bunch to try if any would fit, and said that if they wouldn't, he could break open the box with Sneade's clasp-knife—we hadn't got any carpentering tools about.

He went off with the keys, but did not stop long. He told me none of them would fit, and he wasn't going to spoil his new trunks that way. Besides, he would have to break them all open because he had forgotten where he had put his night-gear; could I lend him some things?—and then Sneade could run to the village before breakfast, and get a man to come over. I agreed to this, and he sat down satisfied. Presently he got up, "just to look round," as he said. I heard him speaking rather sharply to Sneade a few minutes afterwards, and wondered what it was about. I learned subsequently that he had broken a teacup, and was condemned henceforth to use only a saucer. I heard Sneade feebly remonstrate about the cup. He said accidents was accidents, and there warn't no good a-denying of it. I don't know how Bingham quelled this incipient rebellion. I fancy he recalled the fact to Sneade's mind that he was still his superior officer, and expected to be treated as such.

We went to bed early. Bingham retired first. He seemed to feel quite worn out. When I went to my room I discovered why he was so tired. Everything I possessed was on the floor, and my brush and comb and shaving tackle had gone; also several articles of clothing, and a new pale blue silk necktie, which I had rather fancied. I didn't mind that so much, but what I really objected to was that Bingham had made a bed for the fox-terrier in my room out of one of my blankets.

I put him in Sneade's room quietly. He howled a good deal in the night, and I heard Jeremiah throwing boots at him.

I heard Sneade get up at five and trot off on his six miles walk as commanded. He returned at eight with a carpenter, whom he set down outside the captain's door till he should wake.

Then he left the house again. This time I rose and peered out of the window to see what he was doing. He was going down to the brook with the only utensils Bingham had left him—a pail and a saucepan—to get water to fill our baths with. I felt glad I had insisted on his room being furnished with a washhand-stand. He came into my room presently, and poured the water in. It just moistened the bottom of the bath, and he sighed. He had to go three times to the brook for me and five times for Bingham, who liked plenty of water to splash about in.

I had wanted to breakfast in my dressing-gown and slippers, but the Captain had got them, so I dressed in faultless taste and went into the dining-room. I nearly fell over the carpenter on the way, who was talking to Bingham while he was having his bath, and who was so occupied in trying to hear what he said that he did not notice me. I waited breakfast for Bingham, who came down late. I thought the tables looked rather well, as Sneade had done us some broiled kidneys and salmon, both on the same dish. The Captain was not at all satisfied, however. He had a fancy for eggs this morning, and when Sneade said that we had eaten four a-piece the night before, and the shops wasn't open when he went to the village, Bingham said it was disgraceful, and to prevent any *contrete ps* of that kind in future he should keep hens. Sneade saluted and went out.

While we were at breakfast Sneade made the beds. His own did not take him two minutes, as he had merely to fold up the blanket, and he had attended to mine in a very rapid fashion; but he was an immense time in Bingham's room. "The Captain was so particular over the dustin'," as he remarked to me later on.

We spent the morning in tilling the soil. I wanted to put the house in order first, but Bingham said we could do that when it rained, and it was no good wasting a fine day. He wanted to set Sneade an example. He thought we ought to grow our own vegetables, and he told Sneade to be quick and cook the dinner, as he would have to go and buy some seeds when he had finished. He said he had put out the meat ready for him on the kitchen table to save trouble. His willing slave thanked him, and departed.

He came back in two seconds to say that the puppy had eaten as much of our dinner as he could, and buried the rest in a corner of the garden. He added that Punch was sitting over the spot, growling.

Bingham showed energy here. He said we must not be too particular; we had come prepared to rough it. We must dig up the meat and wash it. He spent three-quarters of an hour trying to get Punch off the grave, but in vain. He gave it up at last, and asked fiercely whether Sneade hadn't got a leg of mutton, or some other little thing in, in case of emergencies. Sneade said that there was one kidney, a fragment of salmon, some suet, and some potatoes and onions in the house, so Bingham told him to make an Irish stew, and look sharp about it.

Sneade didn't much like the idea of the Irish stew, and suggested respectfully that if we would only leave the matter in his hands he would engage to do up those fragments so that we shouldn't know what it was we were eating. To this inviting prospect Bingham's gracious consent was at last obtained, and we sat and smoked till Sneade had finished his operations.

When he came to call us to dinner there was an air of subdued triumph about him which made me rather tremble. I did not put my trust in Sneade quite so implicitly as Bingham did. Here, however, I was wrong. Jeremiah had even more than kept his word. No one on the face of the earth could have

possibly told what the real contents of that dish were. He and Bingham had been in India together, and he had made a curry that—but no!—it is useless to describe the burning tortures I suffered after one mouthful.

I think I must have the temper of an archangel, for when the Captain looked at his watch, and said it was time for Jeremiah to be seeing about those seeds, I interfered, and said I didn't want a death in the house quite so soon. Sneade had walked twenty-four miles already, without counting his journeys to the brook, and I thought he looked pale.

Bingham and I almost quarreled over this, but I was firm. I was sorry for Sneade, and told the Captain so; but he retorted that he thought sympathy was rather wasted on Jeremiah; he had got an uncommonly comfortable berth, and knew on which side his bread was buttered. He said Sneade would go through fire and water for his (the captain's) sake; and when I said if the brook stood for the water, and the curry we had just eaten for the fire, no doubt he was right, he grew absolutely furious.

Next week I saw an alteration in Sneade's manner which delighted me. He was always perfectly respectful, but he wore a sullen look, and went about his herculean labors in a dull, dispirited manner; and about ten days after we had arrived Bingham came into my room one morning with an ashen face.

He bent over me, and said in a hoarse whisper:

"Sneade has deserted!"

I fancy Bingham had some vague idea of a court-martial in his mind when he hissed these fatal words into my ear. I hadn't thought myself that Sneade would go off quite so suddenly, but I couldn't resist a fit of laughter that made him furious. He said that was always the way. All unpleasantness of this kind fell on him, and he didn't like it. He would now be in a most responsible position. I said that there was no need to look at things in such a gloomy light. I had no doubt we could get some woman from the village to cook and "do" for us, and we had better walk over before dinner and see.

The Captain grumbled a good deal, and I had to smooth down a great many objections. But he consented to go at last, and we set out. We might just as well have saved our-

selves the trouble, however. Our fame had preceded us, and not a soul would consent to come and share our fortunes in the "house o' cards," as they disrespectfully termed the bungalow. We offered fabulous sums, as we recognized the desperate situation we were in; but in vain. We could tempt none of the daughters of Eve by our brilliant offers. We were exhausted and dispirited after this failure, and went and had dinner at The Blue Pig. Bingham wanted to remain at The Blue Pig indefinitely, and desert the bungalow till we should find somebody brave enough to attend to our comforts. I vetoed this, and bore Bingham off from the convivial parlor of the inn, back to the bungalow and stern reality.

We were laden with parcels, as we thought it just as well to do the week's shopping while we were in the village, and were dreadfully tired when we got home. I understood at once why two sofas would have been desirable, but Bingham looked so miserable that I could not bear to make a fuss.

We went without tea that night, partly because we were too tired to bother about it, and partly because Punch had drunk up the milk in our absence. He had also dug up the meat he had buried a week previously, and placed it in an unpleasantly prominent position on the dining-room table. He seemed so very pleased at having worked so hard that I really could not scold him.

We had beer and bread and butter for supper, and Bingham groaned as he dragged himself to the table to partake of this depressing meal. He went to bed in the lowest spirits, but when we came down to breakfast the next morning he was quite a different man. He said we must make the best of things, and divide the work equally. As I had cooked the eggs for breakfast and got up early, he would make the beds and see to the dinner. I watched him make the beds through the keyhole. His plan was excessively simple. He shook the pillow violently, replaced it, and drew up the clothes as flat as he could over it. It looked quite nice and ship-shape on the outside, but I had to make mine again before I slept.

It was all very well for Bingham to make such a point of cooking the dinner, but it didn't turn out as well as Sneade's after all. He insisted on my going off to fish in the brook to get some salmon trout in for supper, and he shut himself up alone in the kitchen to commence operations.

It was raining a little all the time I was out. I caught some fine fish—also a beastly cold. Other people may have colds, of course, but I don't believe mortal man has suffered from them as I have. I knew I should have to take to my bed if it didn't disappear before night, and then Bingham would have to wait upon me. Ye gods and little fishes defend us! I raced home and changed my things quickly, sneezing violently all the time. Oh, I was in for it, beyond a doubt. I peeped in at the kitchen door before I went into the dining-room. There was Bingham, very hot and red in the face, stooping over the fire, stirring something in a saucepan. He had got out every cooking utensil that had been forbidden to the unfortunate Sneade, and had also unearthed Mrs. Beeton's "Book of Household Management," with which volume my aunt had kindly provided us.

"How are you getting on, old chap?" I asked, looking round the door.

"Here, you come and stir," cried Bingham eagerly. "It's deuced hot work, I can tell you."

I took the sauce ladle which he had been using obediently and bent over the decoction, while Bingham sat down on the edge of the table with an air of relief, and wiped his forehead.

"What's for dinner?" I asked curiously.

"Mutton cutlets, tomatoes, and rice pudding," said Bingham, with some pride; "and the stuff you are stirring is gravy."

"Where are the cutlets?" I asked.

"In the oven with the tomatoes," answered Bingham. "This is such a fool of a book that I chucked it away, and I'm doing things my own way now."

I knew cutlets were not generally baked, but I didn't say so. I also knew that it did not take a whole pound of the best Carolina rice to make a small milk pudding. Here also I was silent. I finished stirring Bingham's lumpy gravy, and then I went and laid the table.

It was rather a superfluous thing to do, as even Bingham didn't eat much that day. The rice pudding was so solid that we could have thrown it from one end of the room to the other, if we had not been afraid of bringing down the bungalow about our ears. We gave the cutlets to Punch,

who took them to his favorite cemetery and interred them at once. Contrary to his usual custom, he never dug them up again.

We lighted pipes after dinner, and drew lots as to who should wash up. It fell to Bingham, who said that he shouldn't bother about the confounded things just then. We had got plenty of extra clean plates, thank goodness! I suggested that this plan resembled the course taken by the March Hare and the Hatter in Alice's famous tea-party; but Bingham was deep in his cookery-book, and didn't hear me.

"Now, look here," he said, after a pause. "Just listen to this. My people used to have a jolly pudding at home called 'Exeter' pudding. I wrote and asked the name before I came down here on purpose. And this is how it is made:—Ingredients.—10 oz. bread-crumbs, 4 oz. sago, 7 oz. finely chopped suet, 6 oz. moist sugar, the rind of half a lemon, 1-4 pint of rum, 7 eggs, 4 tablespoonfuls of cream, 4 small sponge cakes, 2 oz. of ratafias, 1-2 lb. of jam. Put the——"

I interrupted him here, and asked if there wasn't a more simple pudding we could have.

Bingham turned over a few pages, and began to read again:

"Nesselrode Pudding.—Ingredients.—40 chestnuts, 1 lb. of sugar, 1 pint of cream, the yolks of 12 eggs, 1 glass of Maraschino, 1 oz. of candied citron, 2 oz. currants, 2 oz. stoned raisins, 1-2 pint of whipped cream, 3 eggs."

I entreated Bingham to put the book down. I said I thought his mind was getting unhinged, and I couldn't imagine why my aunt had put such injudicious literature in his way. I didn't feel up to talking much, however. I felt queer and shivery, and sneezed so many times that I at last woke up Bingham (who had gone to sleep on the sofa), and said I was going to bed, and he could bring me some hot whisky-and-water. When he saw I was really seedy, the Captain grew quite motherly. He turned to the end of the "Book of Household Management" to see what he ought to do for me, but he got mixed up in the "Rearing and Management of Children" before he found the right place.

Then he read out loud, in a triumphant voice:

"To cure a cold.—Put a large teacupful of linseed with a quarter of a pound of sun raisins"—("What the devil are

sun raisins?' ejaculated Bingham)—“and two ounces of stick liquorice into two quarts of soft water, and let it simmer over the fire till reduced to one quart; add to it a quarter of a pound of pounded sugar-candy, a tablespoonful of old rum, a tablespoonful of white wine, vinegar or lemon-juice. The rum and vinegar should be added as the decoction is taken; for if they are put in at first the whole soon becomes flat, and less efficacious. The dose is half a pint, made warm, on going to bed, and a little may be taken when the cough is troublesome. The worst cold is generally cured by this remedy in two or three days; and if taken in time it is considered infallible.”

Then he laid the book down and turned to me.

“There you are, old chap,” he said.

“Yes, there I am,” I answered grimly. “It’s certainly one of the simplest means of curing a cold that ever I heard of.”

“If we only had the moon raisins and the rum and the sugar-candy and the white wine and the liquorice in the house,” pursued Bingham, “I could make it for you at once. As it is I shall make you some linseed tea. I know there’s some of that stuff here—I saw it the other day.”

“Bingham, for Heaven’s sake,” I began, “don’t——”

But Bingham and “Mrs. Beeton” had retired to the kitchen together, so I dragged myself to bed, in the devout hope that Bingham would not be able to find a receipt for linseed tea.

My wish was more than fulfilled. “Mrs. Beeton” was silent on the subject; but the Captain was a man of an inventive turn of mind. In half an hour’s time he came to my room with a steaming basin, which he set down on a chair.

“Now you’ve got to drink this right off,” said Bingham, authoritatively, sitting down on the end of my bed. “It’s rather thick, but it smells all right.”

I sat up and looked at the stuff. Then I turned to the Captain.

“Bingham,” I said solemnly, “I am grateful to you—but this is not tea; it is a poultice!”

Bingham’s face fell.

“I can’t tell you myself,” I continued, “why it should turn out to be a poultice when you intended it to be tea, but

even for the sake of our ancient friendship I cannot consent to poison myself to please you. Take it away," I added in a sudden access of peevishness, "and bring me some whisky—and—water directly."

Bingham vanished with the basin, cowed. He brought me the toddy, and tucked me up in bed when he said "Good-night."

"I'll get up early and bring you your breakfast," he said affectionately, as he disappeared.

I passed a fiendish night, and awoke worse than ever. Oh, for a cup of steaming hot tea!

At nine I heard Bingham roll out of bed. At ten he appeared with my breakfast.

He had been unable to get the fire to burn, and had used up every stick in the house. He had ambitiously cooked some bacon and made some toast. I drank my tea languidly. The water hadn't boiled, but that was a minor detail. The chill was off it, and that was the great thing. The bacon was black on one side and white on the other, and the toast had faint grey bars across its leathery surface.

I got up after this meal was over. I couldn't lie in bed and let Bingham slave himself to skin and bone for my sake. He made me some lumpy arrowroot at eleven o'clock. His method of doing so was wonderfully simple. He poured warm water on a tablespoonful of the powder, and added some milk and sugar to it. I sent him to the kitchen for a spoon, and threw it out of the window while he was gone. I hate hurting anyone's feelings.

Bingham stated that after dinner he was going to wash up. It was a bad habit to let things accumulate; it made the kitchen look so untidy. He would fry the trout early, and we would have bread and jam for pudding, and then we could start fair.

I agreed wearily. I felt an utter disinclination for food, and when I saw Bingham plunging the trout, uncleansed, into a frying-pan full of lukewarm lard, I swore that not a morsel should pass my lips. I silently went and put some potatoes in the oven, and dined simply off the fruits of the earth. As for Punch, he took to hunting in desperation on his own account, and brought home a jolly little rabbit as his share towards our unhappy housekeeping. I thought it was

rather thoughtful of him, but Bingham looked upon it as quite an insult.

The Captain took all the plates and knives and forks down to the brook in a large clothes-basket, to wash. He said it would be easier than always carting buckets of water up and down. He launched everything into the stream, and sat down on a stone and watched. One teacup floated away altogether, and probably in time reached the sea; the forks sank to the bottom, and Bingham used awful language as he tucked up his sleeves to fish them out again. He couldn't get the grease off the plates anyhow, and got fearfully mad over them.

I don't know how matters would have ended with us if that archangel Sneade hadn't reappeared. He sneaked into the house at dusk, and asked me if I'd like to have him back. He said he was sorry to have caused us any inconvenience, but his health had been giving way for some time, and if he was "took on" again things must please be arranged differently.

Like to have him back! I could have fallen on the ground and licked the dust from off his boots. I said I'd see that he was treated properly. I'd take care that he should have a teacup all to himself, and not be obliged to eat all his meals with a clasp-knife.

Sneade stipulated that he should not be sent to the village more than once a day, that he should have as many sauce-pans as he liked, and that he should not be expected to do any gardening. He was very bold with me, and I acceded to his every demand.

When Bingham appeared the scene was changed. Sneade was no longer a conqueror fixing his own terms, but a culprit sueing for mercy. I don't say that the Captain wished to shoot Sneade with his own hand for desertion, but he intimated pretty plainly that he only let him off on account of his being an old retainer.

However, he cleaned everything up, and cooked the supper, and made things comfortable once more.

I put my foot down for once in my life and talked to Bingham seriously on the subject of Sneade. I pointed out his own arrant selfishness and gross stupidity. I told him that unless Jeremiah was treated properly, that he and I

would go off together, leaving the bungalow to darkness and to him.

Bingham was grave, but he took my lecture very well on the whole. He even acknowledged that he might have been a little exacting. That had nothing to do with Sneade, however. It was his business to put up with it. There were very few men who would have taken him on again after the way he had behaved.

"However," added Bingham, in a sudden burst of good nature, waving his toddy glass above his head, "all's well that ends well, and here's success to the bungalow!"

We have spent many a holiday in it since the time I have written about; and though the "house of cards" is getting a little frayed in places, I can honestly say that I never spent merrier or happier holidays anywhere than I did in the bungalow—thanks to Bingham's Idea.

A "flower story," to-day, child! said Miss Rebecca. Look at my garden! Everything in it froze stiff—an' it's goin' to snow this afternoon. A "flower story"! There's none left to tell about! Of course there's the house plants, but they're a different set altogether. I'm sorry to disappoint you, when you've come out on such a cold day, too. Set up to the fire an' warm your feet.

Tell you a story 'bout myself? Land sake! What would there be to tell? You wonder why I never got married. Oh, you needn't beg my pardon! What is there I should mind about that? I'm fifty-five years old, an' it ain't the first time folks has said they wondered. I never pretended to be set 'gainst marryin' as some does, an' I had my chances; but I had my reasons for stayin' as I was, an' I kep' 'em to myself. They wa'n't nobody's business but mine.

Now don't go to thinkin' I'm put out with you for speakin' as you did. I'll tell you how 'twas, if you want to hear, but 'tain't likely it'll interest you. I wasn't brought up to talk much 'bout myself.

Well, this story's got a flower in it, too, after all. Do you see that "life everlasting" on the mantel? That on each end come from my garden, but the bunch in the middle ain't

*An old maid's love story. Written for the Evening Post, and illustrated for Short Stories.

nothin' but the wild sort that grows out anywhere on the hills—some calls it "Injun posy." What you say? Immortelle? I never heard that name for 't, but I reckon it all 'mounts to the same thing. It has a pleasant smell when it's fresh, kinder soothin'; some folks thinks a pillow stuffed with it is good to make you sleep. That's why grandfather wanted one—But I may as well begin at the beginnin'.

Cousin Almiry Beamon had always kep' house for grandfather sence grandmother died, 'an I guess he thought he could 'pend on her 'long 's he lived. She knew all his ways, an' was used to 'em, an' he had more ways to get used to 'n some, which made it harder for him, an' other folks, too, when she got married. 'Twas all kinder sudden, we wa'n't none of us prepared for it, an' it put us out. I never blamed Cousin Almiry, particularly after I'd took her place with grandfather for a spell. Deacon Swan was a pleasant-spoken, peaceable sort of a man, if he wa'n't one to set the great river on fire, an' I guess Almiry never regretted the change.



But as I was sayin', there didn't appear to be nobody but me to go over an' take her place with grandfather. I tried to make mother say she couldn't spare me, but 'twa'n't no use; she felt bad enough 'bout lettin' me go, but she said grandfather needed me more, an' that settled it.

'Twas a lonesome place for a girl who had been used to livin' right in the town with plenty o' neighbors an' five or six in the family, for there wa'n't nobody but grandfather an' me in all that great house. It used to be a tavern once, an' then it was lively enough, I dare say. There was rooms in it for plenty of visitors, an' the great ball-room was there yet where they used to have their dances. The house stood close to the river, right at the foot of a big hill, covered with rocks and pine trees. The road come windin' down round under the hill—pretty steep in some places it was—an' ended at the ferry, front o' grandfather's. If you wanted to go further, you'd got to cross over. The ferryman was the only neigh-

bor we had, near'n Essex, an' grandfather wouldn't call anybody neighbor that come from there; he was dreadful down on Essex folks.

'Twas in October when I come to live at the ferry, towards the last of the month. Grandfather wa'n't enjoyin' very good health; he'd been so put out 'bout cousin Almiry—it had upset his liver, an' he'd been takin' thoroughwort tea an' tansy, an' I don't know what all. Mother always said he knew as much as most doctors, an' maybe he did, 'cept in prescribin' for himself an' takin' his own medicines. Reg'lar doctors keep their doses for other folks an' find it pays better. But grandfather tried all his'n on himself first, an' 'twas no wonder he got run down. There was always a basin of somethin' stewin' on the stove, an' the garret was hung from one end to the other with herbs a dryin'.



I hadn't been there more'n a day when he sent me after "Injun posy" to make his pillow. I didn't mind goin'; 'twas a beautiful afternoon, the sun a shinin' an' the red an' yellow leaves droppin' down softly an' rustlin' away under your feet. There didn't none of it grow down at the ferry, so I had to walk up the road an' hunt round in other folks' parsters, for there was plenty of it on the other side the hill.

I got my basket full in no time, an' all I could carry in my hands besides, an' then I stopped under an old cedar to rest. I was real warm, 'twas so sheltered there, what with the trees an' all to keep the wind away, an' I took off my sun-bonnet an' sat down on the grass.

How did I look, child? Well, to be sure it's kinder unhandy to describe one's self. You see how I look now—then I was younger, that made all the difference—an' perhaps happier; I reckon that helped some, too. Oh, I can go into particulars if you want me to. Nobody ever would a' thought I was sister to Catherine, she was so light, an' I was dark as a gypsy. I took after father, you see, an' she was clear mother, right through. I used to kinder envy her her yellow curls an' pink cheeks, though I had a good head o' hair myself, thick an' soft, comin' down to my knees when I undid it; but, land, 'twouldn't curl, an' 'twas black as could be.

Yes, I had plenty o' red in my cheeks. Somebody told me once they was like bunches o' carnations, an' I reckon they didn't lose none o' their color by hearin' 'bout it. Got some of it yet? Ah no, child, those carnations faded an' died years ago, winter-killed, like the flowers in my garden.



But what was I tellin' you? Oh, I sat there on the ground fannin' myself with my sun-bonnet. There was a bitter-sweet vine growin' over the old cedar, just full o' berries, an' I sat lookin' up, an' thinkin' I'd get some of it to take home to put in the jars on the mantel, when I see a man comin' towards me down the hill. I'd heard a good deal o' firin' round all the mornin', so when I see how he was dressed an' that he carried a gun, I judged 'twas him I'd been listenin' to. 'Twa'n't nothin' strange to see gunners round that time o' year. They'd come up far's Essex in their boats an' just overrun the whole country. There wouldn't 'a' been a feather left in the land if they'd been the sportsmen they looked to be. But I reckon they got as much satisfaction out o' their fixin's as they could have out o' the birds, an' 'twas better for all hands.

Well, I wa'n't no more 'fraid 'o him an' his gun than the birds had 'casion to be, so I just sat an' watched him comin'. But 'fore he got close up, I see I'd made a mistake—on more points'n one. He wa'n't no stranger to me, though 'twas much 's five years since I'd seen him; an' as for the birds, they hadn't been so safe all the time as I'd thought—his bag looked pretty heavy. I was real pleased to see him, for we used to go to school together, 'fore he went off to sea, an' I didn't know he was home.

"Kit," sez I, "where in the world did you come from?"

His name was Christopher Columbus Madison, but he wa'n't never called by it. Nobody needs a name o' more'n one syllable in Essex. It'll just be wasted an' thrown away if they have it. His brother was Junius Edward, so 'course he was always June, an' it kinder suited him. He was blue-eyed an' light-haired, no more like Kit than Catherine was like me.

But as I was sayin', Christopher he come up to where I was standin' an' shifted his gun inter his other hand, an' put his arm round my waist, and was goin' to kiss me if I hadn't

pushed my great bunch of everlastin' up in his face instead, an' slipped away from him laughin'.



"I should think I might ask where you come from?" sez he, an' then we both explained. He was stayin' home a spell to please his mother, an' I told him 'bout grandfather.

"Plants are scarce at the ferry, I reckon," sez he, lookin' at my big bokay. "Hard up for flowers, ain't you, Rebecca?"

"It's gettin' late in the season," sez I, "but these are pretty. Don't you think so? An' they're sweet."

"I don't admire 'em specially," sez Kit. "But as for their sweetness——" He bent his dark face down over the white flowers again to give 'em another trial.

I wasn't thinkin' he meant to play me a trick, an' was lookin' up at him, innocent enough. Course he had his revenge—an' his kiss—'fore I knew it. I was clean took aback, for I wa'n't one to let the boys take liberties in that way as some girls do. All my Injun posies tumbled in a heap to the ground, an' I just stood there, not knowin' whether to laugh or to cry.

Kit took one look at my face, then he dropped down on his knees in front o' me, an' begun pickin' up my flowers as fast as he could.

Yes, I reckon I can tell you how he looked. Wait a minute till I put another stick on the fire. He was a tall, broad-shouldered young fellow, dark as I was, naturally, an' sun-burned darker still, but he had handsome teeth, an' his eyes were clear an' bright, the sort that could flash easier'n they could cry—but they could grow tender for all their keenness, an' I've seen 'em sad enough for tears. Well, as I was tellin' you, he picked up my flowers in a great hurry, an' offered 'em to me, still on his knees.

"Here they are, Rebecca," sez he, "every one of 'em. Please forgive me for makin' you drop 'em."

But I wouldn't look at him. I picked up my basket an' walked away; so then he jumped up an' come along too, takin' the basket out o' my hand, 'fore I could stop him.

"What are you goin' to do with all this stuff, anyhow?" sez he.

But I thought he'd got through his apologizin' in rather too short order, bein's I hadn't said nothin' 'bout forgivin' him, so I answered pretty stiff an' distant:

"It's for grandfather; I won't trouble you to carry it home for me. It ain't heavy."

"It's no trouble, thank you," sez Kit.

He'd slung the basket on the end of his gun, an' was carryin' it over his shoulder, an' he went right on, talkin' 'bout June, an' folks I knew in Essex, an' places he'd been to while he was away, an' one thing after another, just as unconcerned as could be.

"If I liked a girl," sez he, lookin' at the flowers in his hand, "I should give her a bunch of these to remember me by."

"If you liked a dozen girls, you mean," sez I, for I'd heard o' Kit Madison afore.

"If I liked a dozen, 'twould be the same as none at all," sez he. "Only, one would be different."

We'd reached grandfather's offset steps by that time, an' I thanked him an' took my posies.

"I can't ask you to come in," sez I. "Grandfather don't like me to have much company."

"I'll come some other time then, if I may," sez Kit; "have you forgiven me, Rebecca?"

"I don't see as it's any consequence whether I have or not," sez I. "You're just as happy."

"I'm not," sez he, "I'm very miserable. Will you take this, Rebecca?" holdin' out a bit o' the "life everlastin'."



"Course" sez I, "after all my trouble, I don't want to lose any of it."

"You didn't have no trouble with that piece," sez Kit. "I picked it."

"O well," sez I, "every little helps, when you're makin' a pillow."

"That's not goin' in a pillow," sez he.

"What shall I do with it, then?" sez I. "Put it in one o' grandfather's stews? I don't s'pose he'd know the difference."

"A thing that's everlasting 's meant to be kept," sez Kit.

"A thing that's everlasting's pretty hard to get rid of," sez I, an' he went off in a hurry.



I was glad he did, for grandfather was out splittin' up kindlin' wood, an' I knew he'd have somethin' to say. I took my posies into the house an' spread 'em up in the garret to dry—all but two bunches I put in the jars on the mantel; I hadn't got my bitter-sweet after all, you see—an' the little piece Kit gave me.

"Who was that you was talkin' to out to the door?" sez grandfather when he came in with his kindlin' wood.

"Kit Madison," says I, flyin' round, lively 's I could, gettin' supper.

"I thought as much," sez grandfather, "an' you may as well understand, Rebecca, first as last, that I ain't goin' to have nothin' of that sort goin' on here. If you're cut out after the same pattern as your cousin Almiry, the sooner you leave the better. I can't be bothered in that way again—by Essex fellers 'specially."

I didn't say nothin' but 'twas kinder hard on cousin Almiry. She was forty-five years old, an' I don't believe she'd ever looked at a man in her life till Deacon Swan asked her to have him.

It's begun to snow, child, just as I told you. Look how thick it is down on the river. I'm afraid you'll have a real uncomfortable time gettin' home. You don't mind it? O well, I didn't when I was young.

The winter set in real early that year. The ground was covered with snow by Thanksgivin' time, an' grandfather an' I went over in a sleigh, an' spent the day with father and mother. I was homesick enough when I went back again. 'Twouldn't 'a' been so bad if grandfather'd only let me have some company. I can't begin to tell you how the wind howled around that great empty house. We didn't use the main body of it never, but just lived in a side wing, that was built this way: First the keepin' room, as grandfather called it, joinin' the house; that was parlor, sittin'-room, kitchen

an' dinin'-room, all to once. On the end o' that was a store-room an' grandfather's bed-room; mine was upstairs, over the keepin' room, with windows on the north side, an' south side, too, just as they was down stairs.

'Twas a sightly place. From my south windows I could see way down the river past Essex, an' a long stretch o' meadows, all white an' smooth, with never a track across 'em. My north windows looked up the steep hill-side, covered with white like all the rest, 'cept where the rocks an' the pine trees showed black under their load of snow.

Course the river froze up the first thing, an' great blocks of ice lay piled an' heaped 'long the shore, an' of all the unearthly noises that anybody ever listened to, that river'd make the worst at night, when the tide was comin' in. 'Twas 'nough to scare anybody to death if they didn't know what 'twas. I never could get used to it.

Well, the days was short, an' I kept to work pretty busy. When night come, grandfather 'n' I would sit down, one each side the fire. I'd have my knittin', an' he'd be stirrin' his herb teas, while he talked and told stories. I was interested in those stories, to be sure, but they made me dreadful p'voked, for they was all 'bout what lively



times they used to have in that house years ago, when he an' grandmother first come there to live an' keep the tavern. For you see I knew it might be real pleasant, even then, if only he was willin'. There was young folks 'nough, that would 'a' come if only he'd let 'em. The Madison boys did come every once in a while. June had pretty good luck 'bout not findin' grandfather to home, but he 'most always caught Kit, an' then how he did go on, to be sure. He mortified me so, I 'most felt I'd rather folks would stay away.

I was tellin' Kit 'bout grandfather's stories one afternoon—he'd come in for a few minutes; grandfather'd gone down to the store, an' hadn't got back. I was tellin' him how lively the old place used to be. "I listen to him all the evenin'," sez I, "an' then I can't help listenin' for the rest o' the night. This house is just full o' ghosts. You can laugh, but I hear the ladies goin' down stairs in their slippers—pat, pat, pat. I s'pose it's the rats o' course; and the

swish o' their dresses, that might be the wind; an' the sound o' their voices, an' the music, that could be the wind, too, singin' through the pine trees, but it's too mournful a tune for any but ghosts to dance to."

"Poor little girl," sez Kit, but I reckon he thought I scared myself a good deal for nothin'. He took my hand in his great brown fist, an' he held it, as we stood together 'fore the fire.

"I wish we could have a real party here," sez I. "'Twould make the whole place seem different ever after, an' I don't believe grandfather'd mind, when once they got here."

Kit said if I was sure 'bout that, he could manage the party easy enough. There were plenty of 'em would like to come. They were gettin' up surprises all the time, an' they'd bring their own music an' refreshments with 'em.

Well, child, if you'll believe me, we just 'ranged to do it. We told June, an' he entered right in, o' course. He was all for fun any time.

What's the reason you haven't asked 'bout June's looks, child? He was better worth describin' than most—the prettiest fellow I ever see. Not many girls could come up to him. Those two brothers were dreadful fond o' each other. Folks used to laugh at Kit, an' say the reason he didn't settle down to no girl in particular was 'cause he was in love with June.

But we talked the party all over that night as we stood afore the fire, an' we got everythin' settled.

Land love you! No! He wa'n't holdin' my hand all the time. I took it right away from him! 'Fore he went he asked me what I'd done with his piece of "life everlasting." I s'pose the bunches on the mantel made him think on't. I looked at him as if I didn't know what he meant, an' he laughed right out.

"No need to ask no further!" sez he; "I s'pose it went into your grandfather's pillow with the rest. It'll give him queer dreams, I reckon!"

"He hasn't said nothin' 'bout it yet," sez I, an' the door opened and grandfather walked in.

He was in a dreadful bad temper. He'd met a team on the way home—Essex fellers, he said they was, scowlin' at

Kit—an' they wouldn't turn out for him more'n so much; so he had to do the rest, an' got upset in a drift, an' broke one o' the shafts an' lost his whip. It sounded like the old family coach when he was tellin' it. But it had made him late, an' you couldn't wonder he was put out. I kinder let Kit see I wished he'd go, an' got him off 'fore grandfather said anything very bad to him.

Well, I got that ball-room scrubbed; I did every bit o' it on my hands an' knees, an' 'twas cold enough in there to freeze two dry rags together! June got the wood for the fire, when he was in one day, an' piled it up all ready to light. We grated a wax candle over the floor, an' danced round on it till 'twas smooth as satin. June an' I 'tended to all that; he was a splendid dancer.



We tried to get Kit to see how nice it was when he come in, but he shook his head. He said he'd wait for the party. I thought he looked dreadful tired as he stood there watchin' June an' me. I wondered if there was anything the matter, but June was all right, an' what 'fected one generally touched the other. He brought me another bunch o' everlastings, Kit did. He said his mother sent 'em; they were some she'd raised in her garden.

Well, everything was ready, an' the next night grandfather 'n I was sittin' by the fire, talkin' as usual, an' just as he was tellin' how the parties used to drive up, there came a knock at the door an' there they was. Grandfather was so s'prised I reckon he didn't know for a minute whether he'd gone back to old times or not, an' they all crowded round him, shakin' hands with him an' actin' as if they s'posed he'd be real pleased to see 'em. I showed 'em upstairs to the rooms I'd got ready for 'em to dress in, an' then I slipped away to fix myself up.

I wore a white dress, child, an' the everlastings Kit brought me. They were big white ones, an' shone like silver in my black hair. I wore some more of 'em in the front of my dress, an' right in the centre the piece o' "Injun posy" he give me first. I was kind o' shamed o' it, but June had just told me he was goin' off to sea again the next day, an'—I'd got an ache in my heart, child; I may as well own it! I

could hear the girls laughin' softly in the other chamber, an' the tap of their slippers as they went down stairs, an' the swish o' their dresses. It sounded for all the world like the noises I heard every night, an' the fiddles tunin' down in the ball-room. It all seemed a part o' the same thing.

"It's more cheerful," sez I to myself. But I could hear the moanin' of the frozen river, an' the wind was sobbin' through the pine trees, just the same.

Kit and June met me at the door as I come down.

"The first dance is for me, an' the last one's for Kit," sez June. "We're going to divide even to-night, Rebecca."

"I hope you've fixed everything to your minds," sez I. "When I have company I like to have 'em consult their own wishes 'stead o' me."

"Oh, come! You're satisfied and you know it!" sez June, an' we went off together.

Oh, well I remember every minute o' that evenin', though it don't make so much to tell. I danced straight through with those boys, first one an' then t'other, though I don't s'pose 'twas 'cordin' to rule. More'n one wa'n't pleased by it, for Kit an' June was the best partners in the room an' fav'rites on all sides. But I didn't care; I knew I might as well make the most o' the chance; I'd never have another. Grandfather'd gone to bed in an awful temper, an'—Kit was goin' to-morrow!

"You liked these everlastings better'n the other sort," he said to me as we stood for a minute restin' at the end o' the room.

"What other sort?" sez I, lookin' down at the flowers on my breast; an' he looked, too, an' saw his Injun posy. I didn't dare look up at him, but I knew he saw it.

"You kept it, then, after all," sez he under his breath.

"You said everlasting things was meant to be kept," sez I, turnin' my face away.

The music began again then, an' June came up for his turn. I wondered afterwards why I hadn't noticed how quiet they both was that night—they that always used to be

so lively; but I suppose they didn't give me time, an' everybody round was making noise enough.

I had my last dance with Kit, an' then the musicians put up their fiddles an' the girls fluttered off to put on their wraps. The sleighs come up to the door, an' the party was over far too soon.

Kit an' June an' I was left alone in the empty ball-room. The candles had burnt down to their sockets; I thought 'twas the flickering light made those two so pale!

"It's been the finest party of the season," sez June, with a long breath. "I thank you for bein' so good to us, Rebecca. We shan't forget when we're far away, an'—you've 'greed to treat us both alike to-night—now bid us good-by just the same;" an' 'fore I knew what he was doin', he took me in his arms an' kissed me, an' was gone 'fore I could speak.

"What did he mean?" sez I.

"Only what he said," sez Kit. "We're going away to-morrow, but he'll come back some day, an' you'll be good to him; but—you'll keep the everlastings?"

An' then he was gone, too, with only a clasp o' my hand—he didn't kiss me—he left June that much ahead.

They were loyal to each other, those two brothers. What both couldn't have, either scorned to take. I never see 'em again. Kit was lost at sea, an' June went South an' died o' the fever in New Orleans. Wild boys, folks called them in Essex, but they was true as steel to each other—an' to me! It's most dark, child, my story's took so long! An' the snow is deep. Who would think the flowers could ever have bloomed in that garden to look at it now? But the sun will shine, an' the spring will come back again some day, an' I—have my "life everlasting."

MY RELATIONS WITH MAJOR HOFFMAN*

BY JOHN PALMER GAVIT

I am taking a rest after a round of gaiety and social activity which I never equalled before, and I doubt my going into the "swim" again next winter, or for some winters to come, for that matter. I am desirous to explain my reasons for this withdrawal from society, and in order to do so, I shall be obliged to tell you of my relations with Major Hoffman.

You see, I have always felt that it was, in a sense, my duty to move in good society, and I have been at some pains so to arrange my affairs and social relations as to be able to attend most of the better class of private entertainments given in the city during the past two or three winters. It not only gave me no small enjoyment, but it also assisted me materially in my business.

It was a matter of considerable difficulty to secure an invitation to the Van Schoonhoven reception, but I managed it—no matter how—and it was at this reception that I made the acquaintance of Major Hoffman.

I had strolled into Dr. Van Schoonhoven's office to get out of the hot and crowded reception-room, and in the dim light was leaning against the window-casing, idly tapping on the glass with my nails, when I noticed, at the top of the window-sash, a bit of metal, gleaming in the semi-darkness. I touched it and found that it was part of a burglar-alarm, moving when the window was opened upon another bit of metal two inches above, and by contact completing an electric circuit of some sort.

I am somewhat of an electrician, and my interest and curiosity were at once aroused. Without stopping to think, I unscrewed the upper bit of metal with my knife, and after twisting off the wire which led from it into the woodwork, was examining it when I heard a light step at the door, and looking round found standing by the table a tall, dark-skinned man in evening dress, with black moustache and imperial, and long,

*This interesting story has been awarded the prize as the best in the "Detective" competition. Written for Short Stories. Copyrighted.

rather curly black hair—in all suggesting at once the popular idea of His Satanic Majesty.

By one of those impulses which overcome us all at times, I slipped the bit of metal into my pocket and turned toward the stranger, whom from his dress and manner I assumed to be one of the guests at the reception.

“I hope I do not intrude,” he said, politely.

“Oh, no,” I hastened to reply. “I am glad some one else can enjoy the coolness here.”

“I think I have not the pleasure of your acquaintance,” the stranger queried, smiling, and with a slight foreign accent—“as guests in this house, I trust we need no formal introduction—my name is Hoffman, Major Franz Hoffman.”

“And I am William B. Vance, very much at your service, sir,” I returned, decidedly pleased with my new friend’s voice and manner. “I am indeed glad to make your acquaintance, Major.”

I found Major Hoffman a very agreeable fellow; a gentleman of refinement and culture, polished, well-informed, a ready conversationalist, though decidedly reserved as to himself, and a smoker of excellent cigars. We discussed books, yachting, horses, politics, etc., the major showing himself a man of wide reading and depth of thought along many lines.

I could learn nothing, however, as to his own occupation—he was especially reticent on that point. Major Hoffman casually let slip that he had been in Europe until recently; his business had taken him there on two days’ warning and had brought him back as suddenly; he could not tell how soon the present matter would be disposed of or where he would go next.

“I am an uncertain fellow,” he said, laughing, “and never know my own plans two weeks in advance. Indeed, my plans are largely made for me, and I go and come usually at the bidding of others.”

While we were talking, Dr. Van Schoonhoven entered and I did not see the major again that evening, as I presently returned to the reception room, the major remaining for a chat with his host.

I was decidedly ill at ease for I had that piece of burglar-alarm in my pocket, and could find no opportunity to put it back. I was fully aware that my hasty action might be mis-

construed by one who did not know me and I was anxious lest the major had seen me take it down, though not in the most remote way had either of us referred to the subject. It was no business of his though in any case, and I deemed myself in no way bound to consult him about so trivial an affair. Besides I was inclined to think he had not seen me take the piece of metal. It subsequently appeared, however, that he did see me take it and that his actions were strongly influenced by the ideas this trifling incident suggested to him.

As it happened, I found no opportunity to approach the window again, and I went home with the bit of metal still in my waistcoat pocket.

That night an attempt was made to rob Dr. Van Schoonhoven's house, the burglars entering by the very window from which I had removed the burglar-alarm. They did not succeed in securing any plunder, but were frightened away before any valuables were found.

Now, this attempted burglary was similar to several others which had taken place at some of the finest residences in town, in each case following only a day or two after a reception or ball similar to that at Dr. Van Schoonhoven's house. As it happened, in every instance but one, I had been a guest at the entertainment, and I had almost begun to fear lest the people who had invited me should regard me as a bird of evil omen and cease to "request the honor of my presence" at their houses.

Probably you are thinking of Major Hoffman in connection with these robberies?

I must confess that I did not, though I had occasion afterward to associate him more or less directly with all of them. I had met him but once and for a short time only, and his name did not occur to me until two weeks later, when Senator Cox's daughter was married. At the reception in the evening I met the major again, suave, polite, but as before suggesting Mephistopheles.

I encountered him a dozen times that evening, on the back veranda, in the conservatory, in the garden; till I began to regard him as my evil genius. Particularly did he hover in the neighborhood of the roomful of silverware and jewelry which comprised the wedding gifts. Though I did not see

him touch them or hear him speak of them, it seemed as if some irresistible fascination held him in their vicinity. I think others noticed it as well as I, for I saw them looking at him and remarking upon his actions among themselves.

When I left the house, the last person I saw was the major, who went out with me and left me at the corner below, turning down the side street with a wave of his hand and a cheery, "Good-night, Vance."

I saw the major again that night, and it happened in this wise: The moon had gone down and it was nearly three o'clock in the morning, when, with two friends, I stood in the garden in the rear of the senator's house, under the shadow of a large bush. I still wore my evening dress, but I had a soft hat pulled down over my eyes, and wore a dark overcoat. In my hand I held a revolver, as did my two companions.

In pursuance of my project, it was only a minute's work to quietly open the door at the rear of the house and the glass door at the head of the stairs within. Two minutes later we were in the room with the wedding gifts. A dim light burned in the chandelier, and at the other side of the room the figure of a man lay upon a sofa. I slipped over to his side and with my revolver close to his temple signaled to my friends to begin their work.

At the first soft clink of the silver in the bag into which they were guardedly slipping the wedding gifts, the room was suddenly flooded with light, and I heard an oath from one of my companions. I turned quickly, to see Major Hoffman and three policemen standing in the doorway covering us with revolvers. I had time only to see the major smile triumphantly and nod in my direction before my arms were seized from behind, my pistol wrenched from my hand, and with two sharp clicks of locking hand-cuffs, I was a prisoner. The major flung back his coat so that I could see the police badge shining on his waistcoat, as he remarked:

"Hardly expected to meet again to-night, eh, Vance? You tried that burglar-alarm dodge once too often, let me tell you. Gentlemen, you are my prisoners."

As I before remarked, I am now taking a rest from my social duties. I shall stay at this institution somewhat less than twelve years, and there are eight indictments, I am told, waiting to be attended to when I leave.

THE UMBRELLA FIEND*

BY MARY R. P. HATCH

I was born, brought up, and educated upon expectations, for my great-aunt repeatedly said in the hearing of my parents, both before and after my birth, that she would do something handsome for their child provided they gave it the name of Melissa, which was her own. Unluckily it proved to be a boy, but the name was given me nevertheless, and as Charles Melissa Walton I grew to manhood, tormented by my school-mates, who called me Lizzie, and by my aunt who invariably addressed me as Melissa. I do not know that I ever offended her, but she certainly did nothing handsome for me at her death, for it was not a "patrician" affair by any means, the blue umbrella, which she left me, "in loving token to the best of nephews." Still at the time I did not despair; I knew my aunt was eccentric, and I was quite pre-

*The story of a weird apparition and a peculiar legacy. First printed in the Portland Transcript and now illustrated for Short Stories.

pared for finding concealed, by unscrewing the top of the handle, a different will or deed of all she possessed, since no other considerable legacies had been given to any one else.

But my hopes were futile. After the closest examination

I was forced to see my mistake and to concur with my parents in thinking that my aunt had not been wealthy after all, and that somehow I must have failed to win her unqualified approbation.

I laid away the umbrella, and with it my expectations. Shorn of these I did very well. They had lain like an incubus upon my will, and as I presently discovered, had influenced my parents

also in their way of living; facts and expectations having fallen out, the result to them was disheartening. My parents took a small house in an obscure street and I secured a subordinate position in the Treasury Department at Washington. But I experienced many mortifying results from my aunt's legacy, and I was often led to moralize on the attachment which old and worthless articles seem to possess for their owner and the tenacity with which they adhere to them. I bought at various times new and stylish umbrellas, but they one and all disappeared through loans and appropriations, but the blue one invariably came back to me, though I lent it with assiduity and hopefulness. My friends returned it with stale jokes—it was never taken by mistake. To add to its low-conditioned appearance, my landlady, with mistaken kindness, had patched and darned it to an unusual degree, for, as she explained, "It was beginning to brack away." I thanked her, but with various conflicting emotions. It is strange how nearly the simple duties at times approximate to the higher virtues. At that moment I was a hero, although the surface observer would have seen only a young man thanking his landlady for darning his umbrella.

I was in love, and liked—as what young man does not?—to make a good appearance in the eyes of my lady, but I did not succeed at all times, as you will see, though the occasion I narrate was not the only one when the blue umbrella appeared hateful to me.

One day, my darned umbrella in my hand, I encoun-

tered Lillian with a friend just as a shower seemed imminent.

"Take us under your umbrella, please," said Lillian.

I raised it with sinking heart.

"My great-aunt's legacy," I said as lightly as possible.

"Say rather your great-grandmother's," exclaimed Lillian with unthinking malice.

Upon leaving them I went directly to a public reading-room and deposited my umbrella in the rack with a good many others; and although I had little hope of an exchange, I felt sure that some unlucky wight might take it, provided he had none of his own. Having deliberately planted this temptation in the way of a fellow mortal, I retired from the scene, and with light heart stepped into a store and bought a first-rate article, brown silk with ebony handle.

My conscience pricked me severely through the day for this ungrateful act toward my aunt's memory, for she had been invariably kind to me, and I could not doubt had loved me well, and for months I had been trying to rid myself of the last token of her affection. How much better to brave ridicule than betray the affections of the dead!

In this degraded state of mind, far removed from the satisfaction of the morning, I wended my way home at nightfall.

The event which I now recall, transpired in the year 1879, in the month of October, the second (for it was my aunt's birthday), and as nearly as I can judge at about quarter before eight in the evening.

A drizzling rain had set in and fell with monotonous measure upon the sidewalks, the wind sighed dolefully around the corners, and I was just thinking how disagreeable the weather was, when, as I was crossing Pennsylvania avenue, my attention was arrested by the wail of a little child. I listened to ascertain the direction indicated by the sound and hastened toward it, but it seemed to possess an *ignis fatuus* character, although I could not doubt I was in the right direction

the cry did not seem any louder but as if just as far distant all the time. I walked faster, I almost ran; people stopped surprised, as I hastened past, but still the cry came no nearer.

At last I reached an open space and saw just before me a childish figure stumbling wearily along under a huge umbrella. Upon near approach I saw it was a blue one, with a patch on it; in short it was mine. A mournful, childish wail broke from under it. I forgot all else in my compassion. Raising the umbrella I looked under it and saw, not the features of a child, but those of a wizened, dwarf-like creature with bright glancing eyes and parchment colored skin drawn tightly over his fleshless, bloodless visage.

My blood seemed to curdle in my veins, my knees trembled beneath me, for there was something in the glance he gave me that was demoniac and unearthly to the last degree. I did not fail to note his garb, which was of unusual texture and pattern, being apparently woven whole and drawn over the upper portion of his figure, while his nether limbs, if limbs they could be called, were incased in the same nondescript fashion, being completed by a pair of curiously shaped shoes, picked at the end and with large buckles covering half their surface.

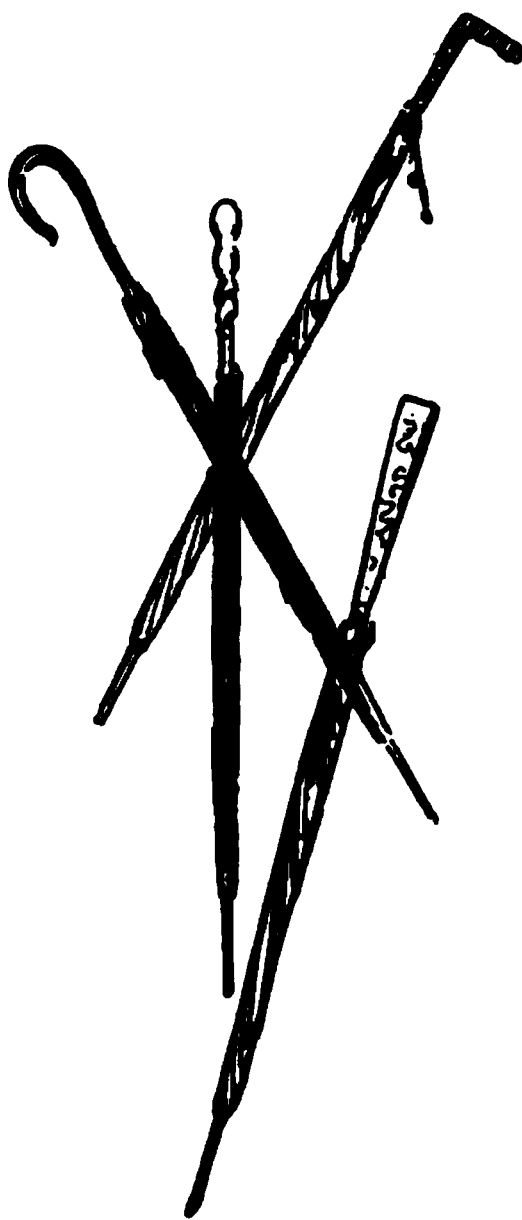
But as I looked the form grew more indistinct, and in a moment I saw the stars glimmering through the shadowy shape. The umbrella only remained to attest to the reality of the scene, and dazed, horror struck, I turned homeward with it still clutched in my hand. I had it now, my aunt's legacy, restored in this supernatural manner. But I felt no satisfaction; instead anger and fear compassed me. Succumbing to the first I threw it from me over the parapet of the long bridge and heard it fall, fall, till it struck the water. Then I hurried away, too stupefied to seek a solution of the mystery either in my own thoughts or other people's.

I mentioned the affair to no one, not even to Lillian, and for a time matters presented no striking points, until about three weeks afterward when we chanced to go into a picture gallery. As it looked showery I had taken my umbrella with me, and I laid it carelessly down in a corner where a few others were stranded, promising myself to keep an eye upon it meanwhile.

After looking about for a half hour we took our way out of the building, and I mechanically put out my hand for my umbrella as we passed.

"Why, Charlie," exclaimed Lillian as I raised it, "you have left your nice umbrella and taken an old one."

I had in my hand the old blue umbrella again, although I am sure that it was the brown one that I grasped in passing. As I hurried back I heard the cry of a child, the familiar wailing sound I had listened to on one occasion before, but this time I did not heed it. My new umbrella had gone the way of all umbrellas, and we were forced to walk home under the darned blue one, on my part with other feelings than those merely of satisfaction, for the unearthly malicious gaze of the Fiend seemed constantly before me.



After leaving Lillian at her home, I went straight to the apartment of my landlady.

"Mrs. Giles, have you any use for this umbrella?" I asked.

"How kind of you to inquire!" she said. "Did Bridget tell you? No, it is my nephew here. He is going home and it is raining so hard! Won't you use it though yourself, Mr. Walton?"

"O, no," I replied, "he can have it as well as not; you need not mind about returning it," turning to him.

"O, I'll send it back; father comes in every day."

"Keep it, I beg of you. I shall never use it again."

"All right! it will suit aunt Belinda capitally," said the boy roguishly.

I devoutly hoped that it would in my heart of hearts.

Months passed. With masculine reticence I kept the mystery to myself, but still I was constantly haunted by the fear that the umbrella would return.

Simple events lead up to the most important; people breakfast serenely before being engulfed by an earthquake, and I had been spending the evening with some friends, not con-

vivially, but in the soberest fashion, and was returning home. It was a moonlight night in April, the 22d, as I find by consulting my diary, and a quarter past eleven, for I had just compared my watch with the clock in the church tower I was passing. Almost without warning the rain suddenly broke over me from a small dark cloud not hitherto observed, while at the same time the wind arose and tore violently around the buildings, which were somewhat detached in this portion.

Such a sudden change from a moonlight evening I never witnessed, and in the dreary *mêlée* between wind and rain I hurried on at a rapid pace as did the few lingering pedestrians, while the carriages returning from the President's reception tore furiously by, adding tumult to the scene. There was something gruesome in this storm coming on unheralded, and it weighed down my spirits in an instant. The wail of a child coming at this moment fitted into the scene so perfectly that I felt no surprise, only compassion for the little creature thus exposed to the furious tempest.

The child was just before me vainly endeavoring to hold upright a large umbrella. No wonder it was terrified at being out alone on such a night!

"What is the matter, little one?" I inquired, alongside.

"O the umbrella is so heavy!" was the answer, in childish tones.

"No wonder; let me carry it for you and then you can tell me where you belong," I said, kindly.

I took the umbrella, but it almost fell from my grasp at the mocking laugh which rang out.

"Ha! ha! where I belong! ha! ha! ha! ha!" and it died away in the distance, though for some seconds the echoes of that demon-laugh returned to me.

This time I had beheld no figure. I had only heard a voice, but the umbrella was in my grasp. I examined it closely, and my fears were realized. It was the fateful blue umbrella I had tossed over the bridge.

At that moment I was actually afraid, for I felt myself to be at the mercy of a fiend whose existence was guessed at, it is true, but little known about, and the extent of whose power might be unlimited to work me ruin.

I passed a sleepless night, and before morning arrived at the determination to speak of the matter to Mrs. Giles. She

was a Scotch lady, shrewd and sensible, and professed to believe many things at which her boarders sneered.

"Mr. Walton, you look ill," said she, as I entered her sitting-room.

"I am not feeling first-rate," I replied. "I have had much to trouble me lately."

"Can I assist you in any way?" she asked, though there was a tightening of the lines of the face which showed that the thrifty Scotch lady apprehended pecuniary troubles only. I hastened to reassure her by telling her my story.

"What is your opinion, or, I should say, advice?" I asked, in conclusion.

"Do not try to rid yourself of your umbrella again, but keep it. That is right, and what is right is wisest."

"I agree with you, and I will do as you advise, for events prove it to be the only course to pursue. But why does the demon make himself visible to me alone?"

"Does he? are you sure that you alone have seen the Umbrella Fiend? I have known two other persons who have seen him, cousins to each other, and one of them the brother of my husband. But their description, although the same as regards looks, varies in some important particulars."

To them he has been chiefly a purloiner of umbrellas, not a returner."

"He is evidently bent upon mischief, and works it with the only instrument he has control of. I have no doubt he returns the old one to tantalize me," I said.

"Very likely. My late husband's brother has been much troubled by the Umbrella Fiend, and his cousin, Mr. Wagner, also. I believe he wrote an account of the Umbrella Fiend demon at one time, but am not sure whether it was he or his father. Anyway, to their family the fiend has always been visible, and they account for it by the possession of a talismanic umbrella which was the gift of the fiend himself to one of their ancestors."

"I should like to have Mr. Giles' version of this mystery."

"I am expecting him in this evening, and he will tell you all about it, if you wish, I am sure," she replied.

"Indeed, it will give me great satisfaction. It is a relief to find that you neither laugh at nor disbelieve my statement," I replied.

"Only fools deride what they cannot understand," said she, sententiously. "Earth and heaven hold enough of mystery to tax the human mind to the end of time. Some people have *double* or *second* sight. It may be the perceptive organs are abnormally developed in such cases. My grandmother could foretell events long before they transpired. It was useless to try to deceive her, yet she was practical, very practical. Some people are taught by dreams and visions. Our philosophy does not cover all, and it fails just when the mysteries begin."

"Do you believe there are other demons besides the Umbrella Fiend, who delight in playing malicious tricks upon us?" I asked.

"Most certainly I do. How else can you account for the way that a broken lamp chimney, for instance, which has been patched up, remains in that ugly condition, while new ones are being broken daily? We call it luck, but it is strange that luck should always be pulled by one string in these cases."

Mr. Giles entered at this moment. He was a thin, gentlemanly-looking individual, not very talkative, as I was already aware, for I had seen him frequently at the house. Although Scotch, there was little trace of his native dialect in his speech, for he came to America when a boy of fourteen, and was educated here, as was my landlady; still there was a noticeable difference in accent, and in his range of thought, embracing, as it did, theories which Americans call vulgar superstitions and put far from them.

Mrs. Giles broached the subject of our conversation.

"The *Umbrella Fiend*? Ah, yes, I see him often—a dwarf-like creature in reddish-brown garb, without reason or tangibility.

A cry like that of a child accompanies its appearance. There are people whose senses are so gross that they cannot perceive him, though not ten feet distant. My partner is one of this sort, though an excellent man. We were walking home together one night last week, and just as we got opposite the Jackson House, we both heard the cry, but I alone saw the little creature stumbling along under the umbrella I had just lost. I wanted it, for it was raining furiously, but I have learned by experience that there is no use in pursuing the phantom."

"Did you ever come up with it?" I inquired.

"Yes, but only to have it vanish from my sight."

"Leaving the umbrella?"

"Taking the umbrella."

"Such has not been my experience," I said. "Where think you is its home?"

"The fiend is ubiquitous. I believe that the trammels of time and space are nothing to him. My sister, who was housekeeper in the Earl Dunniddies' ancient house, wrote me that she saw the Umbrella Fiend one rainy night on the moor, and that she was beguiled into seeing the lost child, as I thought, for hours. Finally she came in sight of the demon, who, with a mocking laugh, vanished before her. By comparing dates I discovered the time to differ but a few hours at most, from the occasion of my seeing it in Washington. Of course, then, he does not employ ordinary means of locomotion."

"Very true," said I, "but wait a moment and I will fetch the umbrella which has twice been restored to me by this fiend."

I brought it down. He took it in his hand and ran his gaze over it, but the quizzical look, to my surprise, turned to one of emotion.

"Tell me," he asked, "was not this the property of Melissa Hayden?"

"It was," I replied. "She was my great-aunt, but she is now dead."

"Your *great-aunt*?"

"Yes, but she was but a few years older than her niece, my mother."

"Dead!" he repeated abstractedly, "and I did not know it. Pardon my emotion; we were once to have been married, but we were separated for family reasons, but we vowed to remain single. This umbrella is a talisman. It will never be lost, and it always brings good fortune to its possessor. I gave it to Melissa, and she promised never to part with it while she lived, and at her death to leave it to the one she loved best."

I felt that moment that I should sink under my humiliation and remorse, but I sustained with great effort my outward composure. I inquired with calmness, "How was it first acquired by your family?"

"I will tell you, and you will see that the narration comprises many facts concerning this matter—but facts which I seldom speak of to strangers. Many years ago my father's great-grandfather was returning from an expedition, not very creditable to him, I dare say, for blackmail was not infrequently the result. It was in Scotland, you must remember, and there were many clannish feuds, and many less outcomes from them, difficult for us to understand at this time. He was passing at midnight through a lonesome glen near Loch Ingril. The rain was pouring in torrents, the thunder rolled from crag to crag, and the lightning lit up the glen in a fearful manner. Suddenly he heard the cry like that of a

child in mortal terror, and other sounds accompanying it, so fearful and unearthly that his blood froze with terror, though he was a brave man in the presence of earthly danger. Nevertheless, he hastened to the rescue, and by powerful blows with fist and weapon liberated the little creature from the clutch of the huge demon, who fled with horrible cries up

the steep crags. What was his surprise, however, to discover, instead of the child he had supposed himself defending, a curious little dwarf with the expression of one who had lived for centuries. While he was still gazing, its form gradually seemed to melt away, and there grew steadily out of the shadowy shape a large umbrella. In a few seconds, doubtless, though it seemed hours to him, he was alone on the moor with only the umbrella before him. He carried it home, and for many generations it was handed down and never failed to bring good fortune to its possessor. It was without doubt a gift of gratitude from the Umbrella Fiend himself to my ancestor, for releasing him from the more powerful demon who assailed him."

"Have you ever known any one besides the members of your own family who have ever seen him?"

"None but yourself," he replied, "and I can understand this now because the talisman is in your possession."

"But surely the covering was not always the same."

"I cannot tell. It is the same now as when I gave it to Melissa," he replied. "I recognized it at once. Have you closely observed the interior?"

I had looked at it many times, but we examined it anew, the web-like wires crossing and intercrossing each other in an intricate web-like fashion that possessed for the beholder a weird fascination.

"See! they have no end, but yet operate perfectly when you wish to open it. My cousin, who was curious to know just the length of the wire, measured with exactitude, and discovered it to be forty ells in length, which in Scotland, among the peasantry, is supposed to be the length of a demon's leap. The handle is carved in such a way that look at it as you may, curious creatures seem to start from it. See this goblin, and this elfish distorted visage, and this one, whose body seems to turn about the rest. Now hold it off a little. Do you observe anything strange?"

I looked at it steadily for some seconds, and, to my great surprise, saw evolving itself out of the whole design, a minute representation of the Fiend himself.

"Strange, strange!" I muttered. "I had hitherto supposed the work to be ordinary inanimate carving of the shop."

Mr. Giles took his leave, and I laid my umbrella away, convinced of its value. In the morning I purchased a handsome case for it and as I placed it therein, I remembered that it was the anniversary of my aunt's death. At that moment Mr. Vesey was ushered in. He had charge of my aunt's estate. I asked him to be seated; he courteously complied.

"Mr. Walton," said he, "it is now one year since your aunt, Miss Melissa Hayden, died, and by her wish I have called to inquire if you have still in your possession the umbrella which she bequeathed you."

With a feeling of guilty satisfaction I showed him the case containing it. What if he had come a few days earlier! Clearly it was a talisman and a lucky one.

"Ah! my dear sir," said the lawyer, "I congratulate you upon your dutiful conduct. She feared that it might be otherwise, and that because it was old and common-looking that you might not keep it. She felt that she had done wrongly by allowing you to indulge in expectations of wealth for so many years, and she was fearful that your conduct toward her might have resulted from sordid motives. Accordingly, she left you this umbrella as a test quite as much as a token, for it is really valuable, and desired you to believe yourself not enriched by her death. If at the end of one year you were engaged in some useful employment and still kept the umbrella, her estate, which has been kept in abeyance, was to be yours. My dear sir, you are a rich man;" and the lawyer ran over some data covering the property, with which, however, I will not trouble the reader.

I married Lillian shortly after, and the umbrella occupies a prominent place in my library. The wail of a child is often heard in our household, but awakens no surprise, for it proceeds from a golden-haired darling answering to the name of Lily.

When on stormy nights the wind and rain are drearily sounding, and I hear mixed with it the weird, uncanny cry, I do not follow it, for I know it is but the Umbrella Fiend who is seeking to delude mortals only to laugh at their folly.

A VISIT*

BY IVAN TURGENEFF



EARLY in the morning of the first of May, I was sitting by the open window. There was no indication of approaching dawn save a white streak far away in the East. The warm, dark night passed away into a cool morning. No mist arose; not a breath of air was felt; everything was colorless, hushed in silence. Suddenly, a large bird flew into the room through the open window.

I started, and watched it attentively. It was no bird, but a little winged female being arrayed in long, tight-fitting raiment. She was of a pearl-grey color, and but the inside of her wings bordered on the most delicate red—like a newly blossomed rose. A wreath of lillies-of-the-valley gathered her ringlets, and two peacock's feathers nodded, like the feelers of the butterfly, over her tiny, finely arched forehead.

She hovered forward and backward a couple of times, her little miniature face beaming with delight as did her large, black, clear eyes, which sparkled like diamonds as she pursued her frolicsome, capricious flutter.

In her hand she wielded a prairie-flower on a large stalk; the "Tzar's Sceptre" it is called in Russia, and it really looks like a sceptre. She touched my head with it as she flew by. I grasped after her—but she was already out of the window and had disappeared. I recognize thee, goddess of fantasy. Once more thou visitedst me in the kindness of thy heart, but to fly away and make thy abode among younger poets. O poesy, O youth, O virgin beauty, but one single moment thou didst hover before me radiant in the dawn of Spring.

*Translated by J. H. Wisby; illustrated for Short Stories. Copyrighted.

A BIT FROM LIFE*

BY MINNIE GILBERT SPRAGUE



A COUPLE passed along the village street. The city boarder at Hurd's lowered her book and looked curiously after them; then, raising her voice a little, asked a question, apparently of the blank side of the house.

"Them," some one answered, in rasping, nasal tones, from behind the green vines which completely hid the window near. "Oh! them's the couple that plays at the fair. You ought ter go out and see um."

"Play? Play in a band you mean?" asked Mrs. Payden-Cooke, with an amused smile around the corners of her mouth.

"Oh! no. They give shows at the races. They both ride, and he goes up in a balloon and comes down with an umberill. It's splendid!"

The speaker, Mrs. Hurd, became so interested in her description, that she leaned from out the green vines, showing a broad red face, brown from the sun and rosy from the cooking stove.



Mrs. Payden-Cooke was fond of harmonies, and this woman rider, with her dark, rich coloring and the black lace drapery thrown over her head, was less of a jar to her sensitive nature, on emerging from Romola and Italian scenes, than a blue sun-bonnet and red calico would have been.

"Is she his wife?" she asked, with her eyes fixed dreamily on the couple, as they moved up the shady village street.

"Laws, yes. I s'pose so. Any ways, he's awful cross to her sometimes." With laughter in her eyes at Mrs. Hurd's unconscious satire on married life, Mrs. Payden-Cooke returned to her reading.



The couple went on, stopping at the little post-office, and reached at length the small and unpretentious hotel, where they were staying during the fair.

*A picturesque story with a tragic ending. Written and illustrated for Short Stories. Copyrighted.

The man stopped in the hall and looked towards the bar-room. The clink of glasses could be heard, and now and then the bar-tender, in his white shirt sleeves, came into sight through the half-open door.

The woman laid her hand on the railing of the stairs and looked for a moment at her companion. He gave her a quick, darting glance from the corner of his rather narrow dark eyes, and two lines cut themselves between his eyebrows.

"Come up with me, Don," said the woman, in a rich low voice.

As she spoke, she rested one hand on his arm, persuasively.

"I'm not ready to come up—just yet," and he passed away from her restraining hand with a jerk and shut the door of the bar-room between them with a slam.

The woman stood for a moment looking at the closed door, then, with a sigh, turned and went up the stairs. "I mean it all for his good. I love him so," she said, as she dropped the lace mantilla from her head.

"He knows he must not drink when he has the ascent to make, why—why will he not remember!"

She leaned back in the straight wicker rocker and looked through the window down into the dusty country street. The place was unusually lively, with crowds of men and boys around the corners and the stores; and every now and then a horse, attached to a sulky and driven by some member of the sporting element, would come by, showing his paces to the admiring eyes of the village loafers, and leaving in his track a rolling cloud of white dust.

A hand-organ, which had followed on in the train of the fair, began to wheeze out an old time air below the window.

Two large tears gathered, unheeded, in the corners of the woman's eyes, then dropped and gleamed like diamonds on her black dress. After a time she heard a step on the stair. At once her appearance changed.

Rising alertly she glanced hurriedly into the little glass, and smoothed the dark locks which the lace drapery had pushed down over her forehead.

A faint rose-color showed in her somewhat dusky cheeks, and the hopeless darkness of her eyes took on an expression of new interest in life.

As she turned her head toward the door and waited for it to open, a soft smile parted her lips and she radiated with love and tenderness. "Is it you, Don? You came soon," she said, then drew back, as she caught the strange expression on his face.

"Uila, Nella is here!"

"Ah-h-b!" Half pain, half anger, this exclamation forced itself out from between her white teeth, and her eyes fastened themselves on his as though to read his inmost thoughts.

"Have you seen her?" she said at last, clasping her hands tightly together, as if to hold in check a flood of pent-up emotion.

"No, she left a message while we were out. She will be back soon. Will you have her up here?"

The woman's eyes travelled swiftly around the room, then back to her companion. "Do you wish it?" she asked.

"Well, you see—she's my wife—and then—we'll be through here to-morrow, and we'd better keep matters quiet."

The woman turned and went back to the wicker rocker, and sat looking down on the village street, with her white teeth pressed sharply into the full red under lip.

Her breast rose and fell under the black lace frills. At last she asked, in a slow, forced tone, "Is she pretty?"

Don Morsell, watching her and waiting for the storm to burst, gave a sigh of relief before answering:

"Well—some think she is. She isn't your style."

"Light or dark?" again asked the woman.

"Rather lightish. Leastways, her eyes are blue, though her hair is brown. Oh! Good Lord, Uila! What is it to you how she looks?"

"She is your wife!" the woman said, then buried her face in the folds of her dress.

The man looked at her for a moment, with a sullen half closing of his eyes, then turned toward the door.

As he put his hand upon the door-knob, a sharp rap sounded on the panel. "Ah! Don!" said the woman, and springing forward clasped her arms around his neck.

"Let me open the door," he said, and unclasped her clinging hands.

As he opened the door, a woman entered. Her bright blue eyes immediately sought out Uila's black figure. There was no deep emotion visible in the rather pretty face, nothing but a look of good-natured curiosity.

"I surprised you, didn't I?" said she, turning to the man.

"Well, yes—I wasn't exactly looking for you," he answered, in an embarrassed way.

"I heard last week, through Jack Denning, that you was to be here, and I thought I'd run over and have a little talk with you. Why don't you introduce me to your friend?"



Don Morsell went through the ceremony and the women bowed—Nella in a pert, flippant, friendly manner, while Uila fixed her dark, serious eyes on the other woman and made a movement filled with reservations.

"Well," said the man, "I'll be back in a minute. You ladies can entertain each other," and, eager to escape from complications, and longing to return to the free and easy atmosphere of the bar-room, he went out and closed the door.

Uila turned the rocker a little, in mute invitation to her guest to sit down.

For a moment there was nothing said, then Nella broke out in a thin, sharp, laughing voice. "See here! Don't look so high-tragedy like! I ain't a going to disturb you. All I'm after is a little money from Don, and a bill."

"A bill—then he'll be free!" Uila leaned from her seat on the side of the bed and lifted her face, radiant with a new hope, toward her companion.

"Free's the word, for both of us," lightly answered Nella.

"And you want to be free—from him?" said Uila, in a voice where wonderment struggled with joy.

"Laws, I never cared much about him at the best . . . and lately I've seen—better men."

"Free, free," murmured Uila.

After a moment she arose and went to the stand where in

a glass some "Black-Eyed Susans" glowed like small suns, and placed the flowers in her drooping dark braids.

She turned to the other woman. "It is almost time to go to the fair-grounds. Will you go with us or wait here?" There was a new tone in the rich music of her voice, and her eyes shone with a brighter light.

"Oh! I'll rest, I guess. I've seen Don ride many a time and it's so hot. I want to have a talk with him, though; where did he go?"

"He'll be up soon," said Uila.

There was a ring of loving proprietorship in her voice.

Presently, however, the boy of the house brought word that Mr. Morsell had gone on to the fair-grounds and would meet the ladies there.

"Poor Don," laughed Nella, shrilly, as she rocked back and forth. "He thought I would make a row."

The other woman regarded her steadily for a moment, then, coming across the room, leaned over her and laid her small hand softly on her arm. "I must leave you now. You mean it all? You will get a bill—you will leave him to freedom?"

"Of course I mean it. I want it myself. I suppose you want to marry him." The speaker looked up at Uila with a smile and gave her a slight nudge in the side.

Uila gazed back at her for a moment and the rich color rose and spread over her face. Then she smiled back and said: "If that can be—if I can be his wife—then I will be ready to die!"

"I guess," said Nella, scornfully, "a woman is generally ready to die, after she's been married awhile—anyways, with most men," she added, as the memory of some one who happened to be the exception in her case, arose in her mind.

"The carriage has come and I must go. You can take a rest, and Don will see you after the races."

Uila turned, and with a grace that told of foreign blood, left the room.

The other woman looked curiously from the window and saw the village hack, with its two bony horses and driven by a small boy with bare feet, standing in front of the hotel.

"I wonder who that is!" she said to herself, as she saw Mrs. Payden-Cooke on the back seat of the carriage. "I ain't so very tired. I believe I'll go, just for fun."

She put on the wide straw-hat, with its garden of scarlet roses nodding on top, and went quickly down stairs.

"I thought I'd come and see the fun, after all!" she explained to Uila.

Mrs. Payden-Cooke, always on the outlook for new experiences, and doubly so now from her enforced quiet in this little country town by order of her physician, smiled on the two women and drew back her skirts to make room for them. Uila bowed, and Nella smiled and took the seat beside her.

"Awful hot, ain't it?" Nella said.

"It is, uncomfortably so," returned Mrs. Payden-Cooke. Then, after a moment's scrutiny of the two women, "Do you both ride?"

"No indeed, I don't. She does, with my husband." Nella bobbed her head towards Uila and set all the scarlet roses a nodding.

"You must be terribly anxious when your husband ascends in the balloon, and especially when he makes his leap with the parachute." Mrs. Payden-Cooke addressed her remark to the wife, but kept her eyes fixed on the dark, serious face of the woman opposite.



"Oh well, we've all got to die, some time."

Nella spoke lightly and flicked her handkerchief to drive away the dust.

Uila grew pale and her eyes looked at Mrs. Payden-Cooke with the expression of a wounded deer.

The carriage drew up in the dusty, noisy fair-ground.

Mrs. Payden-Cooke looked around for a moment at the many booths, where pink lemonade and soda, cheap jewelry and thick sandwiches were rapidly selling, then took her place in the seats called by courtesy the "grand stand."

There were some horses being ridden around the dusty track, but these possessed no interest for her. She had conceived the idea that these riders were worth studying and she felt determined to see all she could of them. She felt with a woman's intuition that there was more hidden behind the

fine face of the woman rider than would appear to a casual observer, and she hoped to be able to find some chink through which she could at least take a peep at the romance she felt sure would repay her.

But now the men and boys hanging around the doors of the dressing-rooms and stables, drew aside, and Don Morsell came out. His flesh-colored tights, silk trunks, and spangles looked tawdry in the bright sunlight.

Uila on horseback joined him immediately, looking well in her close-fitting habit and jockey hat. There was a deep rose-flush on her cheek and a hint of subdued excitement in her manner.

Mrs. Payden-Cooke's interest increased. She tapped her fan in a pleased way, and murmured softly, "I must watch her. If anything should happen——"

Don Morsell took his place standing on two horses and guided them to the woman's side.

She smiled up into his face, but it was turned from her and his smile and glance were thrown the other way. Nella, laughing and jesting with several men, looked up and caught her husband's eye.

The color died from Uila's face, and as the word was given, she set her teeth and lashed her horse with a sharp, stinging blow.

They were off like a flash, the woman far ahead.

For a moment the man followed well. Suddenly there was a break, a rearing of two excited horses, a muttered curse, and the man was on the ground beneath the trampling feet.

Uila turned her head, and, seeing what had happened, pulled in her horse so suddenly that he reared and, pawing the air, seemed about to fall backward.

The crowd held its breath, but in a moment horse and rider came down the track with a furious rush.

The man was on his feet again, unharmed, and as the woman drew near, he jumped, with a graceful bound, to the horses' backs and waved his hands in salutation.

The crowd was delighted. Seldom did they experience a real sensation, and they showed their gratitude now by loud and long applause. After the race was over, as the man

helped his companion from her horse, she held his hand a moment and gazed up into his face with a wistful look.

"Come into the room with me," she whispered. "I have something to tell you—something that will make us both very happy." The man released his hand and looked toward the spot where the rolling, struggling, gaseous monster was waiting to carry him on his dangerous trip to the upper regions.

"I must go," he said.

"Oh! Don, don't—don't try the balloon to-day."

"Of course I shall. What's the matter with you to-day, Uila?"

"Don, you don't seem quite up to your work—and—if anything should happen!"

"Well, I guess nothing will happen," and the man moved toward the balloon.

Uila took a few steps after him, then turned and went toward Nella, who was chatting with some men and enjoying a lapful of peanuts.

"Will you come with me?" Uila asked, and Nella good-naturedly arose, shaking the peanut shells from her dress as she did so. Don Morsell stood laughing and talking with a group of men who had gathered about him. His face clouded a little as the women approached. "We've come to bid you good-bye," said Nella, laughing, as she held out her hand.

"Oh! Don—dear Don—do be careful," and Uila impulsively took a step nearer him as she whispered these words. She longed for a moment alone with him. She wanted to tell him of their coming happiness, which now loomed near them, and bid him value his life more now than ever. He had not seemed so loving to-day, but of course he was worried, seeing his wife here, after a separation of a year. She knew he would be his old loving self again when they should once more be alone. Ignoring Uila, Don took Nella's extended hand and said: "You always had lots of pluck, Nell."

The admiring tone cut Uila like the stinging lash of a whip. She stepped back and the man took his seat on the trapeze; Uila's eyes following him as he was lifted up over their heads, and her hands clasped tighter and tighter, until the nails fairly cut themselves into the flesh.



After the balloon had risen a few moments they could see

the man making his preparations to leap with the parachute.

Uila threw from her head the lace drapery, and her fingers clutched the collar of her dress as if she found it hard to breathe.

Suddenly a shriek, which ended in a moan, rang from her white lips. The man was falling, with the parachute only slightly opened! A crash—and he hung for a moment in the branches of a tree—then dropped, with a sickening thud—and lay on the ground.

The crowd reached him soon and closed around him.

Uila threw herself upon him, kissing the white face and calling on him wildly. A physician hurried to the spot, but after a brief examination drew back, looking grave and shaking his head.

Nella, the laughter gone from her pretty, pert face, stood looking down on the dying man.

Don opened his eyes. He murmured "Come—here." Uila fastened her dark eyes, wide with anguish, on his.

"Nella," he said. Uila drew back as if stricken, her face as white as that of the dying man. "Nella—forgive me. Drink made—all—the trouble. If I—could—get—well—" The tears dropped softly down Nella's cheeks, and fell, shining, on the man's spangles.

"Nella—give—me your hand."

Uila stood motionless, her hands clasped in front of her and her head dropped forward on her breast.

The physician put a finger on the man's pulse.

A few labored breaths and some one murmured, "It is over."

Nella's sobs, like those of a frightened child, sounded loud on the still air.

Mrs. Payden-Cooke put an arm around Uila and led her slowly toward the carriage.

THE JUGGLER OF NOTRE-DAME*

BY ANATOLE FRANCE

In the time of King Louis there was in France a poor juggler named Barnabé, a native of Compiègne who went from town to town giving exhibitions of strength and skill.

On fair-days he would spread out in the public square a piece of old worn-out carpet; and after having collected around him all the children and idlers in the district, by a droll discourse which he had learned from a very old juggler and of which he never altered a word, he would assume attitudes which were not in the least natural, and balance a brass plate on his nose. The crowd at first watched him with indifference.

But when, after a while, he would stand on his hands head downward, and throw up and catch with his feet copper balls which flashed and glittered in the sunlight, or when bending backward until the nape of his neck touched his heels he would cause his body to assume the shape of a perfect wheel and juggle with twelve knives in that posture, a murmur of admiration arose in the audience, and small coins rained upon the carpet.

However, like most of those who live by their talents, Barnabé of Compiègne found it hard work to get along. In earning his bread by the sweat of his brow it seemed that he had to bear more than his share of the burdens attached to the sin of Adam, our father. He could not work enough to meet his wants. In order to do himself full justice he needed, like the trees, to put forth flowers and fruit, the warmth of the sun and the bright light of day. In the Winter he was a tree denuded of its leaves and all but dead. The frozen ground was harsh and unyielding to his necessity; and like the grasshopper of which Marie of France speaks, he suffered much from cold and hunger in the hard season. But his heart was simple and he bore his ills in patience.

He had never thought much about the origin of riches, nor the inequality of human conditions. He firmly trusted

*The story of a simple faith. Translated from the French, by Fannie A. Weston, for Short Stories. Copyrighted.

that since this world was bad, the next one must surely be better, and this hope sustained him. He did not imitate those worthless, thieving strollers who have sold their souls to the Devil. He never took in vain the name of God; he lived in honesty, and though he had no wife of his own he never coveted his neighbor's.

In truth it cost him more to renounce the ale jug than the ladies, for without departing from a decent sobriety he loved to quench his thirst in the heat of the day. He was a worthy, God-fearing man and most zealous in his worship of the Virgin Mary. He never failed when in a church to kneel before the image of the Mother of God, and address to her this prayer.

"Madame, watch over my life until it please God that I should die, and after death vouchsafe that I shall taste the joys of Paradise."

Now one evening as he was walking along bowed and sad, with his copper balls under his arm and his knives rolled up in the old carpet, seeking some barn where he might find supperless rest and shelter, he saw a monk coming down the road in the same direction as himself, and he respectfully saluted him. As they walked side by side at about the same gait, they soon fell to conversing.

"Friend," said the monk, "how is it you are thus arrayed all in green? perchance to take part in some mystery?"

"No indeed, my father," answered Barnabé. "Such as you see me, I am Barnabé, a juggler by calling. The finest calling in the world if it but enabled one to eat every day."

"Friend Barnabé," replied the monk, "look to what you are saying; there is no finer calling than ours. We are continually singing the praises of God, the Virgin, and the Saints, and the monk's life is one perpetual hymn to the Lord."

Barnabé made answer:

"My Father, I confess that I have ignorantly spoken. My profession cannot be compared to yours; and though there may be some slight merit in dancing with a coin balanced on the end of a rod on your nose, I confess that it can in no way equal your holy practices. I would like it well, Father, if I might sing the service every day like you, and especially the service of the most Holy Virgin whose devout worship-

per I am. I would willingly renounce an art by which I am renowned from Soissons to Beaulieu in more than six hundred towns and villages, to embrace the monastic life."

The monk was touched by the juggler's simplicity, and as he was not lacking in discernment he recognized in Barnabé one of those righteously-inclined men of whom Our Lord has said, "Peace be with them on the earth!"

"Friend Barnabé, come with me and I will procure your admission to the convent of which I am Pryor. He who conducted Mary the Egyptian across the desert has placed me in your path to lead you into the way of salvation."

It was in this way that Barnabé became a monk. In the convent, where he was received, the good brothers were ardent enough in the worship of the Virgin Mary, and each one employed all the knowledge and skill with which God had endowed him, to do her honor.

The Pryor, for his part, wrote books which treated, according to scholastic rules, of the virtues of the Mother of God; and Father Alexander illuminated them with fine miniatures in which the Queen of Heaven could be seen seated upon Solomon's throne, with four lions guarding its foot, and seven doves fluttering around her nimbused head to symbolize the seven gifts of the Holy Ghost. She had for companions six golden-haired virgins: Humility, Prudence, Seclusion, Respect, Virginity and Obedience. At her feet were two little naked, white-robed figures in an attitude of supplication. They were souls imploring, certainly not in vain, her all-powerful intercession for their final grace.

On another page, Father Alexander represented Eve under the eyes of Mary, so that one glance of the observer might embrace both sin and its redemption, the woman crushed to earth and the exalted Virgin.

Father Marbode was also one of Mary's most devoted sons. He was continually chiselling little images out of stone so that his hair, beard and eyebrows were white with the dust, and his eyes were all swollen and watery, but he was hale and hearty at a very advanced age—undeniably the Queen of Paradise protected her child's declining years.

And besides, they had poets in the convent who wrote prose and hymns in honor of the most glorious Virgin Mary, and they even counted among the number a Picardian who

related the miracles of Our Lady in the vulgar tongue and in rhymed verses.

When he saw this rich harvest of works and heard the swelling chorus of praise, Barnabé was sad at heart and bewailed his ignorance and simplicity. "Alas!" sighed he, as he walked alone in the little shadeless garden of the convent, "how unhappy am I that I cannot, like my brothers, pay worthy homage to the Holy Mother of God, to whom I have dedicated the whole love of my heart. Alas! alas! I am a rude, untutored boor, and I can bring to your service, Holy Virgin, neither edifying sermons nor scholarly treatises, nor fine paintings, nor perfectly-chiselled images, nor verses counted in feet and walking in step."

After this fashion he moaned and lamented and abandoned himself to the deepest grief. One evening, when the brothers were conversing for recreation, he heard one of them tell the story of the monk who knew no single thing to recite but the Ave Maria. This good man was despised for his ignorance during his lifetime, but in death five roses sprang from his lips in honor of the five letters of the name Marie, and thus was his sainthood made manifest.

As he listened to this recital Barnabé was more than ever filled with admiration for the Virgin's goodness, but he was not consoled by the example of this most blessed death, for his heart was full of zeal and he burned to achieve at once something new to the glory of his Lady in Heaven.

He sought long without finding the means to accomplish his end, and day by day he became more afflicted. At last one morning he awoke in joyful mood and ran straightway to the chapel, where he remained more than an hour alone. He returned there again after the mid-day meal.

And from this time on he betook himself every day to the chapel at the hour when it was deserted, and he spent there a great part of the time that the other monks devoted to the practice of the liberal and mechanical arts. Conduct so singular soon aroused the curiosity of his companions, and the question passed around in the community, why Brother Barnabé made such frequent retreats.

The Pryor, whose duty it is to acquaint himself with every particular in the conduct of each member of his flock, resolved to watch Barnabé during his seclusion. So one day when

the latter had shut himself up in the chapel as was his wont, the Pryor, accompanied by two of the oldest monks in the convent, came and took his stand at the door and peeped through the cracks at what went on within.

They saw Barnabé, head downward and feet in the air in front of the Holy Virgin's altar, juggling with six copper balls and twelve knives.

He was performing in honor of the Mother of God the difficult feats which had won for him the most applause. Not understanding that this simple man was thus giving all his knowledge and talent in loving service to the Virgin, the two old men cried out that sacrilege was being done.

The Pryor knew the innocence of Barnabé's heart, but he believed him to be demented. They all three prepared to remove him in haste from the chapel, when they saw the Holy Virgin descend the altar steps and wipe away with her blue mantle the pearly drops of sweat from the poor juggler's brow.

The Pryor prostrated himself with his face against the stones and recited these words: "Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God!"

"Amen!" responded the old men kissing the floor of the chapel.



THE CASE OF LADY LUKESTAN*

BY MISS L. GALBRAITH

Coeval with the existence of mankind has existed the belief in ghosts. Like other cults, it has had its ups and downs, its periods of exultation and of persecution.

It has received the sanction of the priesthood and attained the dignity of a special office in the Book of Common Prayer. It has been lashed by the scorn of the materialist, and derided by professors of exact Science. Advancing education stripped it to the skeleton as Superstition, and Advanced Thought has reclothed it with the nebulous draperies of Esoteric Philosophy.

The swing of the pendulum and the exertions of the Society for Psychical Research have improved the position of the ghost, but its rights as a citizen have yet to be established. The State recognizes it not. Legally a ghost labors under greater disadvantages than a Catholic before the passing of the Emancipation Bill. It cannot make a will or bring an action at law. It may not, whatever its qualifications during life, celebrate a marriage or give a certificate of death. No judge on the bench would convict on the evidence of a ghost, though, could subpoenas be served on the spirit world, some had escaped the gallows and many died publicly on the scaffold, instead of decently in their beds.

Rightly or wrongly, however, the law takes no cognizance of ghosts, and ghosts would seem to be aware of this and occasionally act with the irresponsibility of those who cannot be called to account.

Legally a ghost has no existence. This point was established in the case of "*Lukestan vs. Lukestan and others.*"

The trial, as may be remembered (it was very inadequately reported in the daily papers), involved the succession to the Earldom of Marylebone (1776 G. B.). Mr. Baron Collings, before whom the case was tried, ruled there was no evidence of a legal marriage between the late Lord Lukestan and Miss Parmela Ardilaun, that the entry of the said mar-

*A strange story and a ghostly appearance. The American Copyright by Short Stories.

riage in the parish register was a forgery, and he directed the jury to give their verdict for the defendants, with costs.

I do not pretend to criticise the learned judge's attitude in the matter, though it was apparent from the first that his "summing-up" was dead against the plaintiff. I merely place before such of the public as may be interested therein the exact facts of one of the most singular cases ever heard in a court of law, and the public, which is always intelligent (is not *vox populi vox Dei* an all but universally accepted axiom to-day?), may judge for itself whether Lady Lukestan, otherwise known as Miss Ardilaun, was entitled to the sympathy due to a deeply injured woman, or the contumely which is justly heaped on the head of an unsuccessful adventuress.

Morally, Miss Ardilaun was not entirely innocent. She undoubtedly played with the feelings of a nervous and hypersensitive man. Other women have done the same without any very serious result. The mistake in Miss Ardilaun's case was, that she did not take the trouble to study the mechanism of her plaything. The truth is that years of over-work, enforced solitude, and rigorous self-repression had reduced the Rev. Cyprian Martyn to a condition of mind closely bordering on insanity, and in this condition he construed an ordinary flirtation into a cardinal sin.

He believed that in falling in love with Miss Ardilaun and acquainting her with the fact, he had broken his faith with God and man, and incurred the curse pronounced on those who, "having put their hand to the plough, turn back."

In a moment of delirium he told the girl that his choice lay between the Creator and the creature—between Good and evil—and that he had deliberately, and with his eyes open, chosen the latter; that he was prepared to risk all penalties here and pains hereafter for the gratification of his passion; and as he had proved himself unworthy of the high office of the priesthood, he would resign his cure, marry her, and claim the privileges he had purchased at the price of his very soul.

It is at all times dangerous to disclose the inmost workings of the heart to a woman, who rarely comprehends, and can never realize, the length, breadth, and depth of a man's passion, and this mad avowal was the seal of Cyprian Martyn's fate.

Miss Ardilaun probably resented the position assigned her by the terms of her lover's choice. She certainly thought him insane, and the event proved her to be absolutely correct. She very curtly stated that at no period of their very informal acquaintance had she reckoned on him as a factor in her future life. She had tolerated his attentions solely because she was bored to distraction in the rural solitude periodically insisted on by her aristocratic and tyrannical invalid aunt; and as to her marriage the only part he could possibly take in the ceremony would be that of marrying her to another man, for she should never dream for a moment of marrying him. With this rather cruel speech, Miss Ardilaun would have parted from her clerical admirer, but before she could realize his intention, Martyn had caught her in his arms and kissed her passionately full on the mouth. "You have ruined me body and soul," he said, when at last he released her; "but remember, I *shall* marry you, if not to myself, then to another man. Living or dying I will have my revenge."

This was his farewell. A week later he was found dead in his study, with an empty bottle, which had contained morphia, lying on the table at his side.

That the unhappy man had deliberately taken his own life was beyond a doubt. All his affairs had been set in order, his liabilities paid, and his correspondence and diaries destroyed. He had written to his brother and only near surviving relative, requesting him to receive all such goods as he might die possessed of, and begging him to carry out certain directions as to the disposal of his body.

This letter, which was produced at the inquest, also referred to some unpardonable sin committed by the writer, which rendered him unfit for prolonged existence. As the dead man had borne the most exemplary character, and was universally respected, this allusion was generally regarded as a symptom of mental derangement.

The local practitioner stated in evidence that the deceased had consulted him professionally before starting on his annual holiday. He was then in a very low, nervous state, and complained of depression and insomnia. He (the medical man) attributed his condition to over-work and insufficient nourishment. Mr. Martyn was a strict Anglican, and

held extreme views on matters of self-discipline. Hallucination as to the commission of some unpardonable sin was a common and painful feature in cases of religious mania, from which, in his (Dr. Garrod's) opinion, the deceased was undoubtedly suffering at the time of his death.

The jury brought in a verdict of "Suicide whilst of unsound mind," and the unfortunate man was buried in the shadow of the village church which for ten dreary years had been the scene of his ministrations.

All this happened in the Autumn of 1886. During the following Winter I made the acquaintance of Miss Ardilaun at a crowded "At Home" given by the wife of a legal luminary of the first magnitude. She was kind enough to give me a dance, and inquired if I knew many people. I confessed I was practically a stranger, brought by my cousin and chum, Charley Roskill, who, as a dancing man and a rising "junior" was a *persona gratissima* with his hostess.

I think it was then Miss Ardilaun owned to being tired and suggested that, as the rooms were hot and overcrowded (which was certainly true), we should find a seat outside, and she selected one immediately opposite the stairs.

Our conversation turned chiefly on Roskill, in whom my companion appeared to take more than a little interest. She said Sir Charles had spoken of him as an Attorney-General of the future, and she asked what struck me as rather a singular question.

"Is he," she said, "the sort of man to whom you would advise a woman to go if she were in urgent need of assistance and advice?"

I replied, "I was convinced that Roskill, like myself, would at any time be ready to place his entire professional resources at Miss Ardilaun's service, and that he was undoubtedly clever."

She laughed a little. "I wasn't sure," she said, "but you ought to know."

Then she went away on the arm of a young man, who had arrived to claim his partner.

It was Lord Lukestan. I saw them several times in the course of the evening, always sitting out in sheltered corners, and engaged in earnest conversation. Lukestan was a good-looking boy, a year or two Miss Ardilaun's junior, and

it struck me that she accepted his manifest admiration in a serious manner, which indicated that she meant business.

I mentioned this to Roskill as we walked home together, and he laughed the suggestion to scorn. Lukestan's people would never permit such a match. It was well known that old Lord Marylebone destined his nephew for his cousin, Lady Adeliza Skelton. It was quite possible that the boy himself might prefer Miss Ardilaun as a bride-elect, but he could not afford to run counter to his uncle's wishes. He was dependent on his prospects as Lord Marylebone's heir, and more than half the property was unentailed.

"Besides," he concluded, "the girl hasn't a penny. She is virtually the companion and white slave of her aunt, old Lady Catermaran. Take my word, it's only a common or garden flirtation, and it won't last long at that."

Roskill speaks with authority on social matters, and I let the subject drop, but somehow I wasn't convinced.

People talked a good deal about Miss Ardilaun that winter, but with the new season interest in her seemed to die down. She was seldom seen, and I heard, through Roskill, that she was devoting herself entirely to her aunt, who had become a confirmed invalid, and went nowhere. It seemed a dreary life for a young and beautiful woman, and I wondered whether Lord Lukestan's engagement to his cousin, which had been formally announced in all the society papers, had anything to do with the girl's sudden retirement from the world.

In June Lord Marylebone died. For the past six months he had been hovering on the brink of the grave, and no one had expected him to last so long. He was, from all accounts, a very disagreeable old gentleman, and I should doubt if any of his relatives, even including his only daughter, much regretted his removal to another sphere.

Lukestan attended the funeral as chief mourner, and was present at the subsequent reading of the will. There were a few legacies to servants and dependents, and a suitable provision for Lady Adeliza. The bulk of the property went with the title.

Lukestan was now Lord Marylebone, and a free agent, but the dead man's shoes, for which he had waited, were destined to be fitted on a dead man. He left Marylebone Castle for

town on the evening of the funeral, an evening made memorable by the occurrence of the worst railway disaster of recent years. The night mail from the North collided with a goods train a little beyond Settringham Junction, and while the confusion and dismay, incidental to such a misfortune, were at their height, the Lowton and Wolds express dashed into the rear of the wrecked passenger train, and completed a scene of horror rarely equalled in the annals of travel.

The daily papers chronicled in full the ghastly details of the catastrophe. The boiler of the express engine burst within a few minutes of the second collision, and steam and fire alike wreaked their fury on the unhappy passengers imprisoned in the overturned carriages. First on the long list of victims, published by the evening press, was the name of Lord Lukestan.

The compartment which had been reserved for his use was reduced to matchwood, and it was only after immense exertions on the part of the officials that the bodies of the young man and his valet could be removed from the mass of smoking *débris*.

"Poor fellow!" said Roskill, as he put down the paper. "His luck has come too late. I wonder"—he paused to light his cigarette over the lamp—"how Miss Ardilaun will take it?"

We had dined early, preparatory to looking in at the Frivolity, but somehow the smash on the Great Northern had taken the edge off our interest in the new burlesque. Roskill's acquaintance with Lukestan had been of the slightest; to me he was hardly more than a name, but the tragic circumstances attending his death evoked a sympathy that was almost personal.

"I wonder," Charley repeated, meditatively, "how Miss Ardilaun will take it?"

The words were barely past his lips when the servant appeared with a message.

"Lady to see you, sir. She wouldn't give her name, but I was to say her business was most urgent."

She must have followed close on Steven's heels, for before he had finished speaking she was in the room. A tall, slender woman, wrapped from head to foot in a long cloak of softly rustling silk. She wore a thick veil, but even under this dis-

guise I was struck by something familiar in her gait and carriage.

The moment the door had closed upon the retreating man, she lifted the thick folds of black gauze. It was Miss Ardilaun. Her eyes were red with weeping, and her face as white as a sheet.

"I hope you will forgive me for disturbing you at this hour," she said, going straight to Charley, "but I knew you lived in chambers, and I wanted to find you at home. I am in great trouble, Mr. Roskill, dreadful trouble, and I must have advice without delay. I thought—I felt sure you would help me."

If Roskill was surprised (and I think he was) he did not show it. He said simply, "I shall be glad to give you any assistance in my power, Miss Ardilaun," and looked at me.

She followed the direction of his eyes, and became aware, for the first time, of the presence of a third person. I intimated my readiness to withdraw, but she cut me short.

"Please don't go, Mr. Bryant. I am not sure that I don't require a solicitor's rather than counsel's opinion—at present. In any case you may as well hear my story—if you do not mind."

I was only too glad of the opportunity, for I own my curiosity was a good deal excited. We sat down and waited.

Miss Ardilaun's manner was that of a woman who has nerved herself to go through anything. She was unnaturally, almost horribly calm. She began without any hesitation, speaking in a dry, metallic tone, which was devoid of the least trace of emotion.

"You have seen in the papers that Lord Lukestan was killed last night in the railway accident? I had better tell you at once that he was my husband. We were married last January. There were strong reasons for keeping the marriage secret. Lord Lukestan was entirely dependent on his uncle, who had other views for him, and he dare not risk the consequences of openly disregarding those wishes. At that time Lord Marylebone was not expected to live more than a few weeks, and he (Arthur) felt sure that a private marriage would be the easiest way of extricating ourselves from the many family difficulties which surrounded us. We never anticipated the necessity for secrecy lasting so long. Of course

Lord Marylebone's partial recovery placed us in a most painful position, but we knew it could only be temporary, and we resolved to chance it and wait. That was why Lord Lukestan's engagement to his cousin was formally announced. What would have happened if the old earl had insisted on their immediate marriage I don't know; fortunately or unfortunately, he did not make a point of that, and when circumstances rendered it necessary that our marriage should be acknowledged, Lord Marylebone died. I cannot tell you how rejoiced I was to receive the news, and only last night I went down on my knees and thanked God for this."

She drew a telegram from her pocket and laid it on the table before us. The message had been handed in at Marfleet, the post town of Marylebone Castle, and ran—

"Thank Heaven, all right at last; am leaving by night mail. Shall be with you eleven to-morrow. Will see Craike on way. Arthur."

"I thought my prayers had been answered," she went on, in the same low, even voice, "that my troubles were over; but you see I was premature in my thanksgivings. To-day I am in the most horrible position in which any woman could be placed—a widow who has never been acknowledged as a wife. I have neither father nor mother. My aunt has never desired my confidence; she has always regarded me in the light of an unpaid servant, and even if I wished to do so, I could not consult her now, for the doctors inform me that in her present state of health any sudden shock might prove fatal. I have no other relations, no one to whom I can turn for help. I must make my marriage public. What am I to do?"

The first step was manifestly to procure the necessary proofs of the marriage. We said so and inquired whether she was provided with a copy of the certificate.

She replied she was quite certain that no such document had been given or demanded.

"I know nothing about the preliminary arrangements," she said. "I left them entirely to Lord Lukestan. I cannot even tell you the name of the village where we were married, though I should be able to find my way there. It is a tiny place, quite out of the world, about ten miles from Gar-

stang Junction. Parker, Lord Lukestan's confidential servant, met us there with a cart and we drove straight to the church. It stands above the village on the top of the hill. We were married by the vicar. I know his name—it is Martyn."

I referred to Crockford, and presently found "Martyn, Lucian John, Vicar of Slumber-le-Wold, Yorkshire."

"That is the man, I suppose. Was he a personal friend of your husband's?"

—"He was a stranger to both of us," she replied, emphatically.

I undertook to obtain a copy of the certificate and wrote the same night to the Rev. Lucian Martyn. To my utter dismay I received in reply a courteous note regretting his inability to comply with my request, as the marriage to which I referred had never been solemnized.

Mr. Martyn's letter reached me by the first post. Two hours later I presented myself at No. 20 Berkeley Square, asked for Miss Ardilaun and was shown into the library. In a few minutes she joined me, and I broke the news as gently as I could.

She seemed utterly overcome. "It is impossible," she repeated; "he cannot deny it. Beside, there are our signatures in the register. Surely he can be made to produce that."

"You are certain that Martyn is the right man?" I asked. "You could swear to his signing the register in that name?"

"No," she replied, "I never saw his signature. I wrote my own name and I saw Arthur write his. Then Parker witnessed our signatures. Mr. Martyn followed, but I did not see what he had written."

"You must excuse my asking questions, Lady Lukestan, where they are necessary. You mentioned that the clergyman who married you was a stranger to both you and your husband. How do you know that he was Mr. Martyn?"

She hesitated.

"I knew him from his likeness to his brother."

"You are acquainted with his brother, then?"

"I was. The subject is very painful to me. Mr. Cyprian

Martyn is dead. I believe he committed suicide, but our—our friendship had entirely ceased before that took place. I never corresponded with him, and our people were not aware of our acquaintance. It was merely an affair of a few weeks and terminated very abruptly.”

“And the likeness between the brothers was so striking that you recognized Mr. Lucian Martyn immediately?”

“The likeness was more than striking, it was horrible”—she shivered—“if they were both living I should not have known them apart. I was aware that Cyprian Martyn had a brother, who was a vicar of a remote parish in Yorkshire, but until the last moment I did not know that he was to marry us. If I had heard the name sooner, I should have used every means in my power to prevent it.”

“You are prepared to affirm on oath that your marriage was solemnized by Mr. Martyn in due form, and recorded in the parish register?”

She looked surprised at my question.

“Certainly I am. You surely do not doubt my word?”

“Not at all, but this is a very serious matter. Will you now tell me every detail connected with the ceremony?”

“As I said, I know nothing of the preliminary arrangements. During the third week in January, Lord Lukestan and I were both staying at Chilworth Priory. My aunt was also to have been of the party, but a severe cold detained her in town. Lady Chilworth has great influence with Aunt Maria, and persuaded her to let me go to Yorkshire without her; I was to take part in some theatricals, and my place could not be supplied at the last moment. It was the opportunity for which we had been waiting, and we decided not to let it slip. Lord Lukestan’s plans were complete. He showed me a special license, and he said Parker knew a village where we could be married, and that all the necessary steps had been taken. We left Chilworth on the morning of the 23rd of January. I had previously wired home that the heavy snow would delay my return twenty-four hours. Lady Chilworth was going abroad almost immediately, and as I write all my aunt’s letters I was not afraid of the deception being discovered. We left the train at Garstang, where Parker was waiting with a hired trap, and we drove to this church. There was no one about. The clergyman was

waiting for us at the chancel step. He began the service at once. Parker gave me away, and we afterwards signed our names in the vestry. We drove back to the station and caught the next train to Doncaster. I returned to town the following day."

"Was there any conversation between Mr. Martyn and yourselves?"

"None; he did not speak to either of us. Lord Lukestan put the fee on the vestry table. It was a ten-pound note, and he remarked afterwards that the vicar might have wished us luck. There was no luck for us, I suppose," she concluded bitterly.

I was a good deal puzzled by this sudden check. However, I said what I could to comfort her, and suggested that the clerk could be produced as a witness.

"There was no clerk," she replied, "there was no one in the church but the clergyman, Parker, and ourselves."

From Berkeley Square I hurried to the Temple, found Roskill, and decided with him that I should go up to Slumberle-Wold, see Martyn, and examine the register.

I found the vicar at home, and acquainted him with my errand. He received me civilly, and in reply to my questions informed me that I was quite at liberty to inspect the register, but it was not possible that I could find any entry of the marriage.

"Since I received your letter," he said, "I have referred to my diary, and will gladly give you all the information in my power. I find that on the 20th of January I received intimation of an intended wedding. The note, which was brought by a man who looked like a superior servant, had neither address nor date, and was signed Arthur Evelyn Lukestan. I am quite ignorant of the various titles of our aristocracy, and was not aware of the existence of such a person as Lord Lukestan. I was informed the marriage would be by license, and that, owing to certain circumstances, which could be explained to me, if needful, before the ceremony, it was to be of a strictly private character. I ascertained that the contracting parties were of age, and fixed the time for one o'clock on the 23rd. Early that morning I was called to the sick bed of a distant parishioner. As I had been advised that the wedding was to be as private as possible, I did not

inform the clerk that his services would be required. I intended to do so on my return from Bretwell. Unfortunately I met with an accident. My horse set its foot on a stone, stumbled, and threw me heavily. I lay for some time unconscious, and when I came to myself I found my ankle so severely sprained that I was unable to move. The road is a lonely one, and it was at least two hours before I could obtain assistance. I reached home at 3 o'clock, and immediately sent to the church. There was no one there. I afterwards ascertained that a lady and two men, strangers, had passed through the village in the direction of the church, and had returned after the lapse of half an hour. I waited in daily expectation of hearing of or from them, but no news came, and as I did not know Lord, or as I thought, Mr. Lukestan's address, I was unable to communicate with him. I ought to mention that an open envelope containing a ten-pound note was found on the vestry table. I kept it for three months, anticipating some explanation from the donor, then, as none came, I concluded the money was intended for an offering, and devoted it to the relief of the poor."

I inquired if it were possible that in his absence any other clergyman could have been pressed into the service.

"Quite impossible," he replied. "If any priest could be found willing to commit such a breach of etiquette, he would certainly have informed me of it afterwards; and, in any case, the clerk would have been called."

I said I should like to see the register, and Mr. Martyn led the way to the church.

It stood, as Miss Ardilaun had said, on an eminence at some distance from the village, and was separated from the vicarage by the entire length of the garden and churchyard.

"Is this door always open?" I inquired, as we entered the south porch.

"Between matins and evensong the church is open for private prayer, though," with a sigh, "my parishioners do not often avail themselves of the privilege."

We went up to the vestry. It was furnished with a table, two chairs, a hanging cupboard, and a massive, iron-bound chest of black oak. The vicar took a bunch of keys from his pocket, selected one of peculiar shape, unlocked the chest, and produced the register.

"We have not many marriages here," he said. "I have only solemnized two in the last six months. The last was in April."

He turned to the place. There were two entries at the top of the page. The final date on the preceding leaf was for the 30th of December.

I made a minute examination of the pages. Then I glanced keenly at my companion.

"Mr. Martyn," I said, "these two leaves are stuck together."

"Impossible!" he answered.

"Feel them," I rejoined. "This page is thicker than the rest, and the edges are not quite even at the bottom."

He scrutinized the book, testing the substance of the paper between his thumb and forefinger.

"You are quite right," he said, quietly; "though I should never have noticed it. Have you a knife?"

I opened my penknife and very carefully inserted the thinnest blade.

How the leaves had been secured, it was impossible to say. There was not the slightest trace of mucilage on the edges of the paper, and the incision once made, they parted easily.

At the top of the left-hand page was the entry of a marriage between Arthur Evelyn Lukestan, bachelor, and Pamela Mary Ardilaun, spinster. The witness was William John Parker.

"My God!"

The exclamation came from the vicar. His eyes were fixed on the register, and his face was white to the very lips.

"What is it?" I asked, in surprise.

He pointed speechlessly to the fourth signature. It was written in a firm, very uncommon hand, "Cyprian George Martyn."

"That is not your name, Mr. Martyn?"

He faced me suddenly.

"It is not," he answered. "It is that of my brother Cyprian, who died last October."

I confess I felt horribly taken aback. Miss Ardilaun's admission that she had been acquainted with the younger Martyn, taken in connection with the other peculiar circum-

stances attending her marriage, gave rise in my mind to a most uncomfortable suspicion.

I regarded my client with the sincerest admiration and sympathy. I was anxious to prove the validity of her claims and the truth of her statements, but I could not blind myself to the fact of her position being desperate, and I knew that a desperate woman is frequently unscrupulous.

For a few seconds we remained silent, each, I believe, suspecting the other's complicity in what was evidently a deep-laid plot. Then I pulled myself together.

"You say that is your brother's name, Mr. Martyn; is it also his handwriting?"

"It is like it, very like it, but it can only be a forgery, since, as I told you, my brother is dead."

I examined the entry carefully.

"The particulars are filled in by the same hand, and it would not, I imagine, be an easy one to imitate. Had you seen this signature during your brother's lifetime, should you have had any doubts as to its being genuine?"

"If he were living, none."

"I should like to compare it with an authenticated specimen of his writing, if you have one by you. I need not apologize for the trouble I am giving you, since you will understand that this is, to my client, a matter of life and death, or rather of what is more important than either to a woman, of honor."

"I understand that, and you will have any assistance I can render, but——"

He broke off abruptly, and proceeded to re-lock the chest.

"We will carry the register up to the house. I have some of my brother's letters there, which will serve your purpose."

"Is the register usually kept here?"

"Always."

"And the key, have you more than one? I see it is of a very uncommon pattern."

"So far as I know, there has never been a duplicate."

"And it has not, to your knowledge, left your possession?"

"I am sure it has not. I carry it constantly about my person."

"Had you those keys with you on the 23d of January?"

"Yes, I am certain of it."

"How, then, was it possible for any one to get at the register?"

"I cannot tell. It would appear impossible, were it not for that extraordinary entry."

"It would be impossible to tamper with that lock," I said, pointing to the coffer.

"I should have thought so."

We retraced our steps, the vicar carrying the register, which he placed on the table in his study. He then produced a bundle of letters, selected two or three, which he glanced through and handed to me. We compared the signatures with that in the register. They were identical. If a forgery, it was the work of an expert. No amateur could have counterfeited so perfectly those singular characters.

"Your brother's handwriting bears very little resemblance to yours," I remarked. "Were you much alike in person?"

"There was a family likeness, not, I think, very strong; but you can judge for yourself. This is my brother's photograph."

He pointed to a massive silver frame which occupied the centre of the mantel-piece. I went over and studied the portrait. It was a large, three-quarter platina-type of a tall, handsome man, apparently several years younger than the vicar of Slumber-le-Wold. There was, as he had said, a family likeness between the two faces, but it was not remarkable, and no one could for a moment have mistaken one for the other.

I returned to town, sorely perplexed, drove straight to the Temple, where I had wired, requesting Roskill, and, if possible, Miss Ardilaun, to wait for me, and told my story.

Charley was furious. He made some very intemperate and highly absurd charges against the clergy in general, and Mr. Martyn in particular, and declared himself as firmly convinced of Lady Lukestan's good faith as he was of his own.

I ventured to suggest that in this case his convictions were of less moment than those of the judge and jury, and I doubted if any judge would share the opinion he had so confidently expressed. For my part, I could see only three possible solutions of the mystery. (1) That Martyn, who was the only person having access to the register, had, for

some private motive, tried to suppress the fact of the marriage, in which case the history of his accident and absence on the 23d of January was an invention, and could easily be disproved ; (2) that Lord Lukestan, finding the vicar absent, had obtained the services either of another clergyman or some one personating the same, and had gone through the marriage ceremony, by way of satisfying Miss Ardilaun's scruples ; (3) That the story of the marriage was an entire fabrication, the last resource of a despairing woman, in which case it was impossible to account for the entry in the register.

At this juncture Lady Lukestan was announced. She was dressed in deep, but not widow's, mourning, which became her admirably. She was certainly a very beautiful woman, and, looking into her clear blue eyes, it seemed impossible to doubt her integrity.

I questioned her closely as to her previous statements, but she never swerved a hair's breadth from her original story.

I had brought with me a photograph of Mr. Lucian Martyn, and one of his brothers. She looked at the former, and failed to recognize it, though she thought there was something familiar in the expression. I then handed her the portrait of Cyprian Martyn. She gave an involuntary shudder.

"That is the man who married us," she said, and laid the photograph, face downwards, on the table.

"Are you quite sure," I urged, "that you are not making a mistake ? The first portrait is that of the present vicar of Slumber-le-Wold, the other that of his brother, who, as you know, is dead."

I shall never forget her expression at that moment, the mingled horror and repulsion written on her colorless face.

"Then it *was* he !" she cried. "I knew it. My God ! how horrible !"

She made an uncertain step forward, stretching out both hands toward Roskill, with the sudden uncontrollable impulse of blind terror, and slid helplessly to the ground in a dead faint.

I felt certain then of what I had suspected from the beginning, viz., that Miss Ardilaun knew more of the mystery than she had chosen to confess, and I considered she was treating us unfairly, for a lawyer cannot, any more than a physician,

advise on 'an incomplete diagnosis. She had voluntarily placed herself in our hands, and she ought to have taken us unreservedly into her confidence.

I found an opportunity of expressing these sentiments to Roskill before he escorted her home, and advised him to try to get at the truth. She might speak freely to him. I was sure she had not done so to me.

The more I thought over the bearings of the case, the more I questioned the expediency of taking it into court. The whole weight of evidence told against the plaintiff. She could not produce a single witness to corroborate her story.

That Lukestan intended to marry her there was no reasonable doubt; but the sole proof of the ceremony having taken place was an entry in the parish register which was manifestly a forgery.

The only witness whose evidence would have carried any weight, the valet Parker, was dead. It was the bare word of a woman, and a woman in desperate straits, against the reason and common sense of the whole world.

In my opinion, Miss Ardilaun's wisest course would be to keep quiet. Lady Catermaran was now lying in a state of semi-unconsciousness, and her decease could only be a question of days. Presumably she would have made some provision for her niece, and at her demise Miss Ardilaun would be her own mistress. She might retire somewhere abroad, and her unhappy story need never be given to the world.

But to drag the case into court seemed to be absolutely courting publicity and shame. She might consider herself Lukestan's wife, but, in the eyes of the law and of society, she was simply his mistress, and her child would be declared illegitimate.

And then there remained the question, had she really believed herself legally married, or was her story only a last desperate expedient to avert the consequences of a fatal error.

The doubts in Miss Ardilaun's sincerity, which her presence invariably tended to dispel, had an awkward way of returning very forcibly when the magnetism of her personal influence was removed.

Late in the afternoon Roskill returned. I saw at once that he had something to tell me. He threw his hat and

gloves on the table, and began to pace restlessly up and down the room.

"It is the most extraordinary case that ever has or will be heard," he said.

"She has told you everything?"

"Yes."

"Did the marriage ever take place, then?"

He looked at me murderously.

"You heard her say so; that ought to be proof enough for you."

It wasn't, but I did not attempt to argue the point. I inquired who had performed the ceremony.

"The man whose name you saw in the register, Cyprian Martyn."

"But he's been dead for the last nine months," I objected. "How could he reappear in the flesh to solemnize a marriage?"

"I don't know," he answered, "how the devil works, or by what laws he is bound. There are some things which cannot be explained. That brute—well, the man is dead, and I won't abuse him, though, living and dead, he's behaved like a brute—got acquainted with Pam—Miss Ardilaun, fell in love with her, and wanted to marry her. She refused him, whereupon he conducted himself in a manner for which his only excuse could be that he was insane at the time. He told her that she had ruined him body and soul, that he meant to have his revenge, and if ever she married, he should marry her, if not himself, then to another man. Then he went back to his parish, somewhere in Dorsetshire, and committed suicide."

"Well," I said, "what has that to do with the Lukestan marriage?"

"Everything—the man kept his word. He did marry her to Lukestan. The poor girl had a secret terror all the time that he had done so, but the thing seemed so incredible that she fought it down and hoped against hope, until it was impossible to doubt any longer."

I sat and stared at him blankly. He was absolutely serious.

"Do you really expect me to believe," I said at last, "that a man who has been dead for nine months could rise from

his grave, assume bodily form and material clothing, go through a form of prayer, extract a register from a locked chest, make that entry, and disappear again into the limbo of the unknown?"

"I don't expect anything. I tell you facts."

"Good heavens, Charley, you must be mad! You can't believe such a monstrous story!"

"I believe it entirely. It is the only rational explanation of that entry."

"Rational!" I echoed, contemptuously.

"Yes, rational; for what do we know of the powers and limitations of what we are pleased to call spirits? Nothing. On the other hand, is it reasonable to suppose that three people could obtain access, without a key and without damaging the lock, to a secured chest, abstract the register, the whereabouts of which they were entirely ignorant, and make an entry in the name and handwriting of a dead man—a piece of penmanship, moreover, unrivalled in the annals of forgery? Surely the latter theory is as great a strain on your credulity as the former."

"Take it into court and see what they say to it there?"

"I intend to do so," he answered, quietly.

"No solicitor will undertake the case."

"If you mean that you won't, I shall find some one who will, though I would much rather receive instructions from you than from a stranger."

Then I gave tongue. For two hours I used every argument in my power. I stormed, I persuaded; I believe I threatened, but he remained quite unmoved.

"It isn't the least use, Jack," he said, when at last I stopped, exhausted. "Legally and morally Pamela is Lukestan's widow, and I mean to fight to the last gasp for her rights. If we succeed, so much the better for her and her child. If we fail, well, we shall have done our best to vindicate truth and justice. In either case, I may as well tell you that I intend to make her my wife. Her aunt is not expected to live through the night. She will be alone in the world then, and I shall marry her as soon as I decently can. I believe she has cared for me from the first," he added, softly, with the credulity of a man who loves.

I doubted it, but what was the use of saying so. Roskill's

will has all through our joint lives dominated that of his weaker brother, and when a few days later I heard from Miss Ardilaun's lips the particulars of her extraordinary story, I succumbed to that personal influence which would subdue any man save an unprejudiced judge.

The long and short of it was that Roskill had his way, and in process of time the case of "*Lukestan vs. Lukestan and others*," came on for hearing. Miss Ardilaun's appearance created a profound sensation in court. She told her story simply and directly, and the most severe cross-examination failed to shake her in the smallest detail.

The fact of Lukestan's having taken out a special license, together with his letters (produced), proved he had desired to be, and believed he was, legally married. The evidence of the station-master at Garstang, of the innkeeper from whom the trap was hired, of the villagers who saw the party pass through Slumber-le-Wold, all confirmed their progress to the very door of the church, but there stretched a gulf which no human witness could bridge.

The personality of the officiating priest, the authorship of the entry in the register, alike remained an inexplicable mystery.

It was admitted on all hands that Roskill's speech was a model of forensic rhetoric. He surpassed the utmost expectations of those who had prophesied for him a brilliant future, and placed himself at once in the front rank of the Junior Bar. But no argument, however powerful, could have convinced a dozen hard-headed, practical Englishmen of the possible existence of ghosts. They were called upon to decide whether Cyprian Martyn, being dead, had resumed his fleshly habit to solemnize a marriage which consigned the woman who had rejected him to shame and obloquy, or whether, on the other hand, Pamela Ardilaun had, with the late Lord Lukestan and Parker, the valet, fraudulently obtained access to the parish register and therein forged the entry of a fictitious marriage—and the twelve good men and true unhesitatingly decided against the ghost.

Judgment was given for the defendant, with costs, and Pamela Ardilaun left the court a ruined woman. The slender fortune left her by her aunt was more than swallowed up by the expenses of the trial. Her fair fame was blasted, she

was branded before the world as an impostor and an adventurer. Verily, if her story were true, Cyprian Martyn had taken a complete revenge.

Yet the woman was not left utterly desolate. Through all stress of weather Roskill's love stood firm. He absolutely refused to be dismissed. He assumed the management of her affairs, provided her with a home, and procured the first medical advice when, broken down with anxiety and despair, her life hung trembling in the balance. He followed to the grave the hapless infant, who lived just long enough to receive its father's baptismal names of Arthur Evelyn, and, finally, in spite of her repeated refusals to burden him with her wretched life, made her his wife.

A year after Lukestan's tragic death the two were married before the Registrar. Nothing would have induced either to risk a repetition of the horrors of that other wedding, and as the law takes no cognizance of ghosts, Cyprian Martyn's uneasy spirit was unable to interfere in the civil ceremony which made Miss Ardilaun Charley Roskill's wife.



SIMPSON OF BUSSORA*

BY JAMES PAYN

I have a profound distrust of all travellers. Not because they are prone to tell me untruths about their experiences, for that has in a great measure become a dangerous experiment; wherever they may have been, other people have now also been, and it is easy, if I may use a professional expression, to "correct their proofs." No, my distrust arises from the ideas in my own mind of the experiences that they do not tell me. When they get away from the regions of civilization, and out of the influence of public opinion, think I to myself, what is it these people do not do? For the very fact of a man's being a traveller is, between ourselves, by no means a good sign. Why does he not stop at home in the bosom of his family, or, if he has no family, acquire one? It is his duty as a citizen.

One of the quietest and best fellows I ever knew—and I have known him all my life—was Simpson of Bussora. I was at school with him five-and-forty years ago, and though his house of business is at the distant spot just mentioned, I had met him from time to time during his periodical visits to this country, and always found him unchanged—gentle, unassuming, modest, and orthodox in his opinions. Our house does a little business with him in shawls and carpets, but our acquaintance is mainly social. My wife and daughters are very partial to him and delight in his Persian tales, which are picturesque and full of local color. He brings them little bottles of scent which perfume the whole neighborhood, and now and then a scarf that is the envy of their friends.

I never, however, entertained any idea of Simpson as a son-in-law until my wife put it into my head. He lived too far away for me to picture him in such a relation, and though I knew he had made money, I did not think he had made enough to return home and settle. His income was a very

*An amusing satire on the ways of foreigners in distant lands.

handsome one; but living at Bussora, he had given me to understand, was dear and did not admit of much saving. Above all, Simpson struck me as by no means a marrying man. Whenever the subject of matrimony was mooted, he always smiled in that dry, cynical way which proclaims the confirmed bachelor. Household matters did not interest him; he did not take much to children; he would smoke until the small hours of the morning, and raise his eyebrows when one said it was late, and perhaps one's wife might be sitting up. He would say "Really!" as though such an idea as one's wife sitting up for one was preposterous, but could never concern him.

I need not go into the causes which led to my conversing with Simpson on the subject of matrimony. Suffice it to say that I did not do so of my own free will. I had received instructions from my wife to "sound" Simpson on the matter, with relation to some "ideas" that she had got into her head with respect to our second daughter, Jane, and "to hear was to obey," as they say at Bussora.

"My dear Simpson," said I, as we were cracking our walnuts together after a little dinner under my own roof, "I often wonder why a man like you, with a large income and a fine house, as you describe your home to be at Bussora, has never married. It must be rather wretched living out there all alone."

"Well, it would be, no doubt," said Simpson in his quiet way. "But, Lord bless you! I've been married these twenty years."

You might have knocked me down with a feather.

"Married these twenty years! You astound me. Why, how was it you never spoke about it?"

"Oh, I don't know; I thought it wouldn't interest you. She was a Persian, you know. If she had been a European, then I should have told you."

"A Persian wife! Dear me," said I, "how funny it seems!" I said "funny," but at the same time all the suspicions that I entertained (and now entertain more than ever) respecting travellers and persons who abjure civilization, crowded into my mind. "Now, what color, my dear Simpson, if I may put the question without impertinence, are your children?"

"Well, we've got no children," said Simpson, in his usual imperturbable tone. "We never had any."

I don't quite know why, but somehow or other I thought this creditable to Simpson. It was very wrong in him to have married a Persian, perhaps a fire-worshipper, or at best a Mohammedan, but it was a comfort to think that the evil had, so to speak, stopped there. To think of Simpson with a heap of parti-colored children, professing, perhaps, their mother's outlandish faith as they grew up, would have been painful to me, in connection with the fact that Simpson was at that moment under my roof, the same roof with my wife and daughters, and that I was the churchwarden of our district church. I forsook at once the particular subject of Simpson's wife to discuss the general subject of polygamy.

"The Persians have more wives than one, have they not?" inquired I.

"Those who can afford it have," said he; "but it is not so usual as you may imagine."

"I need not ask how so profligate a system must needs work," said I. "It is a domestic failure, of course?"

"You need not ask the question, as you say," replied Simpson, cracking a walnut. "But if you do ask, I am bound to say it is so far like marriage in this country—it is sometimes a domestic failure and sometimes not. Perhaps it requires more judgment in selection; you have not only to please yourself, you know, but to please your other wives."

"Goodness gracious!" said I, "how coolly you talk about it! I hope no European who happens to be resident in this strange community ever gives in to the custom?"

"Some do and some don't," was the reply of Simpson. "I lived in Persia with one wife for fifteen years before I gave in."

"What! You married a second wife, your first wife being alive?"

"Just so," was the unabashed rejoinder.

Simpson swept the walnut-shells into a corner of his plate, and helped himself to sherry. "I have now four wives."

"Bless my soul and body!" said I. "Four wives?"

"Yes. The story of my little ménage may seem in your ears rather curious. If it will not bore you, I'll tell you about it."

I had no words to decline the offer, even if I wished it. My breath was fairly taken away by Simpson's four wives. The traveller who once told me that he liked his food uncooked (human flesh) had given me rather a turn, but that was nothing to this revelation of my present companion: a man we had always considered of the highest respectability. and who my wife had thought would have suited our Jane.

"Well, it was at a picnic party on the plains near Bussora that the thing first came about. My wife and I were both present at it; and my European notions preventing my believing there could be the least misunderstanding about it, since I was already married, I made myself very agreeable to a certain Persian lady. She was neither young nor pretty—just like what my wife herself, indeed, had grown to be by that time—and I no more thought of making her my No. 2 than—dear me!—of embracing Mohammedanism.

"My attentions, however, were misconstrued; and her brother, being a violent man in the Shah's cavalry, and knowing I had a fairish income, insisted on my becoming his brother-in-law. I believe Irish marriages are often brought about in the same way, so there was nothing in that; the peculiarity of the case lay in my having a wife already, and one who was very resolute, indeed, to prevent my having another. I spare you the troubles that ensued. Between my wife No. 1 on the one hand, and her sharp tongue, and the officer of Spahis on the other, with his sharp sword, I was placed in a very unpleasant position, I promise you; but in the end I married Khaleda.

"I am sorry to say the two ladies got on extremely ill together. It was said by a great English wit that when one's wife gets to be forty, one ought to be allowed to change her for two twenties, like a forty-pound note, and I dare say that would be very nice; but, unhappily, I had now two wives, each forty, if they were a day, and there was no prospect of getting them changed, or parting from them in any way.

"Pirouzé and Khaleda led me a most unhappy life. They quarrelled from morning to night, and so far from being able to play off one against the other as I had secretly hoped, I was treated with great unkindness by both of them. They were a matter of very considerable expense, of course, and

very little satisfaction. My position, in fact, became intolerable; and as I could please neither of them, I resolved to please myself by marrying No. 3."

"A twenty, I suppose?" said I, interested in spite of myself in this remarkable narration.

"Well, yes; that is, she would have been a twenty in England, but in Persia young ladies marry a good deal earlier. She was a charming creature, and cost me——"

"What! did you buy her?" cried I, in astonishment and horror.

"Well, no, not exactly; her father, however, insisted upon something handsome, and there were heavyish fees to be paid to her mother and sisters, and to the Governor of Bussora. The custom of the country is curious in that respect. After one's second wife a considerable tax is levied by the government upon marrying men. However, Badoura was worth all the money; she sang, she played divinely; that is, she would have done so if she had not been always crying. Pirouzé and Khaleda made her life utterly miserable. Hitherto they had been at daggers drawn with one another, but now they united together to persecute the unhappy Badoura. Her very life was scarcely safe with them. Wretched as my former lot had been, it was now unendurable, for one can bear one's own misery better than that of those we love."

Here Simpson took out his handkerchief, of a beautiful Persian pattern, and pressed it to his eyes.

"Yes, my dear friend, they led my Badoura a dog's life—did those two women. I felt myself powerless to protect her, for I was never physically strong; and though I did not understand one-half of the epithets they showered upon her, I could see by the effect they had upon her that they were most injurious—what I have no doubt in this country would be considered actionable. For her, however, there was no remedy, and I think she would have sunk under their persecution had I not married Zobeide."

"No. 4!" cried I, aghast. "What on earth did you do that for?"

"I married Zobeide solely and wholly for Badoura's sake. I chose her, not for her beauty, nor her virtues, nor her accomplishments, but entirely for her thews and sinews. I said to her, 'Zobeide, you are a strong and powerful young

woman; if I make you my wife, will you protect my lamb?' and she said 'I will.' It was the most satisfactory investment—I mean, the happiest choice—I ever made. My home is now the abode of peace. In one wing of the house abide Pirouzé and Khaleda, in the other Zobeide and Badoura: two on the east side and two on the west. Each respects the other; for although Pirouzé and Khaleda are strong females and could each wring the neck of my dear Badoura, Zobeide is stronger than both of them put together, and protects her. Thus the opposing elements are, as it were, neutralized: the combatants respect one another and I am the head of the united house. I got letters from all of my four wives this morning, each of them most characteristic: Badoura forgot to pay the postage—she has a soul above pecuniary details—and her letter was the dearest of all."

"Don't cry, Simpson," said I—"don't cry, old fellow. The steamer goes on Tuesday, and then you will see all your wives again. They will welcome you with outstretched arms—eight outstretched arms like the octopus."

I confess I was affected by my friend's artless narration at that time, though, since I have reflected upon the matter, my moral sense has reasserted itself, and is outraged. I state the matter as fairly as I can. I have been to picnics myself, as a married man, and made myself agreeable to the ladies. Well, in Persia this might have cost me my life, or the expense of a second establishment. So far, there is every excuse for Simpson. But, on the other hand, the astounding fact remains that there are four Mrs. Simpsons at Bussora. Whenever I look at his quiet, business-like face, or hear him talking to my wife and the girls about Persian scenery, this revelation of his strikes me anew with wonder. Of course I have not told them about his domestic relations; it would be too great a shock on their respective systems; yet the possession of such a secret all to myself is too hard to bear, and I have therefore laid it before the public.

The whole thing resolves itself into a rule-of-three sum. If even a quiet, respectable fellow like Simpson, residing at Bussora, has four wives, how many wives—well, I don't mean exactly that; but how much queerer things must people do who are not so quiet and respectable as Simpson, and who live still farther off.

ETCHING : DEMONSTRATED *

BY HENRY WINSLOW HALL

What glory and fortune were M. de Merveilleau's! Not read by a "set" alone was he, but by the masses. How his pen-work thrilled one! What terrifying fancies its after-thought produced! His themes? Intoxicatingly morbid. His expression? Entrancing. His style? Enthralling. And his realism—fidelity to detail! Ah, what art! And so he wrote—rapidly, unhesitating, unerring. His soft, fine hand, meet servant to his fertile brain, sped page on page. The house within was stilled to sleep. Twelve, one, two, the marble clock tolled time.

"The guilty wretch, with head low drooped," he wrote, "listened for the slightest sound. Yet what cared he for capture now? His life was lived; his object gained. She was dead. And yet—a muffled tread of feet without—he springs erect, a curse between his teeth. Oh, for a means!' And he cast his eyes about him. Ah! a rope dangling there from corniced doorway. Quick! the knot!—he knows it well: four twists and then the loop. Beneath the left ear, in that little hollow—so! Ah—rr. And thus they found him."

The writer stops, his brow contracts—this masterful sire of realisms. For once he hesitates. "Can man," he argues, "so kill himself in such brief space?" Realism must not be sacrificed to convenience. The low rustle of the breeze-stirred curtains, and the sound attracts the writer's eyes. As though on fate intent, the wind moves more strong still, and sweeps to view a silken cord of the tapestry hanging. How like to a hangman's noose it looks, suspended there, above a chair in the shadowy corner! "A hangman's noose!" It pleases the writer's realistic fancy. He goes to it and steps upon the chair. Only the subject lacking, and how easy then to solve his problem! 'The knot!—he knows it well: four twists and then the loop. Beneath the left ear, in that little hollow—so! Ah—rr.'

And thus they found him.

* A martyr to realism. Written for Short Stories. Copyrighted.

A SUMMER DAY'S ADVENTURE*

BY COUNT ALFRED DE VERVIUS

Ville-Jossy is a large town in Tourraine lying lazily stretched out on the banks of the River Loire between Blois and Tours. The white houses, with green blinds and red roofs, often embowered in vines and surrounded by blooming gardens; the hills against which they nestle, crowned with trees from which peep forth the graceful tower of a Renaissance château or the terrace of an Italian villa; the luxuriant vines which carpet the hillsides; indeed all the environments of the town give it an air of ease and prosperity which make it one of the most charming spots even in this beautiful country so justly called the Garden of France.

But to be perfectly truthful I ought to add that Ville-Jossy only presents this Arcadian aspect, when, under the radiant sunshine the river rolls a flood of silver; when the trees are full of warbling birds; when the swallows circle gracefully around the tower; and the hawthorne and the honeysuckle are blooming in the hedges; and when through an open window, or behind a slightly raised curtain, you espy a pretty maid attending to the needs of a modest household or hear her in the street trilling some rustic refrain, often an old folk-song.

But when it rains, when all windows are carefully closed, when the gutters roll with torrents of muddy water, when the nestlings are cold even under sheltering mother-wings, when the swallows have hidden themselves and the distracted trees twist and crack under the fury of the gale; ah! then Ville-Jossy is no longer Arcadian.

The story I am going to tell began precisely on a day like this. Until noon the weather had been superb, then

*Translated from the French by Carrie Collins Reed, and illustrated for Short Stories. Copyrighted.

suddenly, as often happens at the end of August, a time when storms are frequent, the sky was obscured and a warm wind began to marshal an army of clouds and mass them in solid ranks over the châteaux and villas; then presently the artillery of heaven was let loose against the presumptuous clouds that dared to eclipse the sun; the deep boom of thunder fell upon the ear; and the jagged lightning appearing like a fiery whip-stroke, goaded the offending masses of vapor into tumultuous confusion, until they looked like a flock of sheep, frightened by the roar of a lion, bounding and crowding into an Arabian valley; or their distress could be likened to the vain arguments of the Agnostics of which St. Peter spoke when he compared them to "clouds that are carried with a tempest."

Finally, goaded by the lightning, lashed by the hurricane, which added its sinister shriek to the detonations of the thunder, the flying clouds began to weep, and with such bitterness and abandon that the old folks of Ville-Jossy said to the young people that there never had been a storm like this, no, not since the deluge. But happily for us, the duration of this new flood was only forty minutes instead of forty days; for everything is smaller nowadays, both men and things. However, this miniature deluge was long enough to drench to the bones two pedestrians whom I am going to present to you. One was a large man of unusual height, forty or forty-five years old; his walk and movements were characterized by a suppleness and grace rarely possessed by people of exceptional size; his head was superb and he carried it with the dignity of Danton or Mirabeau. The broad forehead, the noble features, the broad glance of the eye, reminded one of the Jupiter Olympus of the Greeks. This flattering picture is only the exact truth. I speak with the authority of one who has often seen and heard him, and many people now living will attest to the truth of all I have said.

His companion was a younger and smaller man; he was twenty-three, but looked older. A black moustache partly concealed a refined but rather haughty mouth; his eyes were remarkably beautiful and brilliant; his hair was thick and curly; his olive skin possessed the warm pallor the Italians call *morbidezza* and which revealed his southern origin. Both were dressed with the quiet elegance that betokens the man of the world, though at the moment of which I write it would have been difficult to have recognized either the personal beauty or the correct attire which I have described. Their coats were bespattered with mud; the rain had ruined their hats and parted their hair over their faces in a ludicrous manner, and altogether they presented the dismal appearance of those who have been half drowned. Besides, the clay of the highways has an especial affinity for the varnished boots of the aristocracy of Tourraine, and our two travellers, who did not appear to be accustomed to long walks, waded slowly and painfully through the mire, confounding the rain, the mud, the weather, and even beautiful Tourraine, whose reputation for beauty and hospitality seemed to them an airy falsehood. "We shall be dissolved before we get there!" exclaimed the younger of the two.

"If we ever do get there," replied the other. "We have taken the wrong road. We should have turned to the right; I told you so, but you would not believe it."

"What is that metropolis I see over yonder?" said his companion, ignoring his reproof, which he trembled to believe might be well merited.

"Ought it not to be Blois?" said the large man gravely. "Blois is only sixty leagues from Tours and cannot be far away."

"It may be Paris," said the other gaily. "Now we shall be enlightened on that point, for I hear wheels," replied the younger man, turning with difficulty on the two mountains of mud on which he was perched, which, though they might not have been as high as the Himalayas were not easier to drag from one's feet. They awaited with expectancy the approach of a gig which advanced rapidly, drawn by a sturdy nag. "Per Bacco! it is a priest!" exclaimed the elder of the two as soon as he could distinguish the occupant of the vehicle.

"This is lucky for you, M. le Maître de Chapelle," said his friend, "as between church people, you know, the least he can do is to take us to the château. Attention, Luigi! Be persuasive and eloquent!"

"Are you mad!" cried Luigi. "If I should ask him to take us into the gig in such a state as this, he would whip up his Bucephalus, and, leaving us in the lurch, would hurry to the village and recount how he was stopped by vagrants—two veritable tramps, ragged and disreputable, and thus we could not even get any information."

And notwithstanding their *ennui*, they continued their gay banter until the gig overtook them and stopped.

"What is the trouble, gentlemen?" courteously asked the priest, whose benevolent face and snowy hair loomed up over the rain-apron of the gig.

Luigi, dropping his jesting manner, said, with an air of graceful dignity: "Pardon us, M. l'Abbé, for stopping you on such a road and in such weather, but my friend and I are going to Château Blangis, and——"

"But you have taken the wrong road, and are more than three leagues from there," interrupted the priest, with an accent of genuine regret.

"Well! We're in a beautiful fix," said Luigi. "Three leagues! I would as soon be scalped as walk three leagues more; and you, Marquis?"

"What a predicament we are in," said the Marquis, glancing disconsolately at his friend, then at his muddy boots, his hopelessly twisted trousers, his reeking coat-sleeves and the inky pair of cuffs which adhered to him in a picturesque but deplorable fashion. "The fact is, we are not in court dress," said Luigi, with conviction; and after a short silence, during which the priest regarded them with a benevolent expression, he resumed: "I think the best thing we can do is to return to Tours."

"What is the good of that? Don't you remember that we sent our trunks to Château de Blangis?"

"Come," said the old priest, who thought it cruel to prolong an embarrassment which he had resolved to end, "there is one way, gentlemen, if it be agreeable to you, and that is," added he, lowering the apron of his gig, "for you to do me the honor of accepting my hospitality. In a quarter of an hour we will be at the vicarage, when you can dry yourselves and rest while I send to Château de Blangis for your trunks."

"Monsieur le Curé!" cried the Marquis, hastily, "at the risk of being impolite I accept with as much willingness as gratitude." Luigi was not more ceremonious than his friend, and as the nag was a good roadster and going towards his stable, in less than fifteen minutes they were at Ville-Jossy.

When they arrived at the vicarage the curé's servant was standing in the doorway, and at their approach she hastened to hold the bridle while her master alighted. Not seeing the two strangers, she exclaimed in a tone of anxiety:

"Well, Monsieur le Curé, has the notary of Tours given you the five thousand francs?"

"No," responded the priest, laconically, making a gesture towards his guests.

But the good woman did not notice his warning, and pursued her subject vehemently.

"*Mon Dieu!* what will we do, then? The builder has been here this morning, and he says—"

"That is all right, that's all right, Jeanne," interrupted the priest quickly. "Get into the gig and take Blanchet to the stable, and tell the sacristan to get ready to go to Château de Blangis with his cart." Then, in a more conciliatory tone, he added, pointing to the strangers: "These gentlemen have accepted the hospitality of the vicarage; get us a good dinner, Jeanne, that they may not cherish too unpleasant memories of Ville-Jossy."

The old woman made a profound courtesy, reddening to the roots of her hair, while the two friends followed their host into the vicarage.

I would like to draw for you a careful picture of the vicarage, where every object breathed forth the peace of a holy life; but this tale is not a careful drawing; it

is only a rough sketch. I will content myself, then, with saying that the furniture was not luxurious, not even abundant, but comfortable, sufficient, and of a cleanliness that reminded one of Holland. The metal work gleamed like silver; not a speck of dust could be found on the curtains and carpets, and the wainscoting, rubbed and polished every day for twenty years by Jeanne, looked like ebony.

The priest conducted his guests immediately to their chamber, where Jeanne had already lighted a fire of dried grape branches. A servant announced that the sacristan awaited the orders of Monsieur l'Abbé, and the Marquis wrote a short note to the Baronne de Blangis, at whose house they had been invited to visit. This he handed to the gracious host, who hastened to give further orders to his messenger.

"That's a noble old fellow, that priest," said the Marquis, pulling off his coat, while Luigi tugged breathlessly at a refractory boot.

"Yes," he responded, after an interval of fruitless pulling. Finally the boot decided to obey, and with a great sigh of relief he prepared to attack the other.

"I think he is annoyed, he is so preoccupied," said the Marquis, hanging his coat before the clear fire in the grate.



"About the five thousand francs, of which —of which—the old woman spoke!" said Luigi, between two vain efforts to tear his foot from the embrace of the second boot, which proved even more stubborn than the first.

"Supposing one should give him five thousand francs—what do you say to that?"

Luigi stopped short with the boot half off, his eyes as round as lotto counters, and exclaimed: "You have five thousand francs to give away! Why, I thought we came here for economy's sake. How can I believe that you dream of giving five thousand francs to a good fellow of a priest whom you have known only a half hour!"

"Luigi, you are a base ingrate! If he had asked five thousand francs before rescuing you from the mud and rain, you would have promised it with enthusiasm."

"I would not have promised it, either, because I did not have it," responded Luigi, tugging anew at his boot; "but I ought to confess that I would not have hesitated if I had had it, and I would not have haggled over the payment now either. Ouf! that boot is off."

"Stop; I have an idea!"

"Ah! if you have an idea, that changes the case," said Luigi, warming his huge person before the fire.

"But I would like to know about it—the servant spoke of a builder—it is not likely that this brave old priest has built a château? The money must be needed for his church."

"Why not ask the servant?" suggested Luigi.

"Question a servant! The idea!"

"Ah, indeed! I am not a gentlemen, then? I simply suggested an easy way."

"Certainly, I understand," said the Marquis, quickly, fearing he had offended his friend, "but how would it do to ask the priest himself?"

"No, that would seem like meddlesome curiosity, for we cannot help him!" Then he added, after a pause, hoping to change the conversation, "Well, it is much pleasanter here than on the highway."

But the Marquis was not to be diverted from his thoughts, for he repeated, "Nevertheless, I have an idea; we will see."

Although it was Saturday, a fast day, the dinner was ex-

cellent; but it was evident that the curé was greatly troubled, though he made every effort to entertain his guests cheerfully, and Jeanne's honest face was very sober notwithstanding the willingness with which she served at table.

When the good woman had brought the cheese and fruits,

the Marquis, who had in the end taken Luigi into his confidence, planted his elbows firmly on the table, and, looking steadily at the curé, said rather brusquely:

“So you are in need of five thousand francs, Monsieur l'Abbé, and the need of the money annoys you greatly?”

“Why! — yes — that is the truth,” stammered the old priest, turning very red, for his guest's apostrophe embarrassed him greatly.

“And you need it very much?” insisted the Marquis, accenting every word as if to underscore it.

“Need it? I should think he did!” cried Jeanne. “Why, for two weeks,” she continued with vehemence, “the poor dear man has not slept, and when I bring him his coffee in the morning he never touches it, but just stares at the cup until it is cold. Not need it, indeed! Holy Mother of God!” and she wiped her eyes with the corner of her apron.

“Jeanne, you are foolish! be quiet!” said the curé in a tone he tried to make severe.

“Well, my dear Curé,” said the Marquis, joyfully, “since you need the money so much you shall have your five thousand francs to-morrow.”

“But,” hazarded the Abbé more and more embarrassed, anxious to accept this remarkable offer but doubtful if his dignity would permit him to take such a gift from a stranger.

“There is no but,” gaily cried the Marquis, “to-morrow after mass, — you have high mass to-morrow, do you not? — Then to-morrow after mass you shall have your five thousand francs.”

“But you do not belong to my parish; you do not live in the vicinity; there is no reason for such a gift, nothing to justify it. It is for the church in truth; but though it is proper that the rich should give to the poor to build a house of prayer, to raise a monument to Him who maketh the harvests to ripen, there is no reason why a stranger—”

The Marquis smilingly interrupted him with a question.

“There are many châteaux here?”

“Oh, yes! You will see to-morrow at high mass a congregation that will remind you of St. Roch, or the Madeleine. During the Summer the attendants of those fashionable churches are in the country, and we have a numerous aristocracy here in Touraine.”

"Good," ejaculated the young man, who appeared to follow exclusively his own thoughts and not to entertain objections, "then permit me to ask you two more questions. Have you an organ in your church?"

"A magnificent one," said the priest with a sigh. "It is precisely this organ that has ruined us, for it cost fifteen thousand francs."

"Then you must have an organist, also?"

"Certainly."

"If you have an organ and an organist, you have the scores of some masses by the masters, Haydn, Mozart,—?"

"Oh! yes, I have some there," replied the priest, pointing to a chest filled with a quantity of books, MSS. and account books, among which were the scores of masses by Haydn, Mozart and even one by Pergolésé.

"Good! And now one more question. Could you procure thirty easy chairs, comfortably upholstered? For," he pursued, looking at Luigi, "they must be well seated, at least."

"Surely," said Jeanne, who did not in the least comprehend the object of all these questions, but who was ever zealous, "surely we can get some from the doctor, the notary, the justice of peace, the recorder, the teacher; that will be forty any way."

"Mdle. Jeanne, you attend to that as soon as evening comes," said the Marquis; then turning again to the curé he continued: "This is my plan, and if you approve of it I promise you five thousand francs to-morrow."

"Go on," said the curé, with a benevolent but incredulous smile.

"My friend," pursued the Marquis, "has been chapel-master for the king of Naples, and his majesty will tell you that he has a magnificent voice and is an excellent musician."

"Ah! Monsieur is a singer!" exclaimed Jeanne. "One would believe just to look at him that he has a strong voice—a voice like Father Barbeau, our best singer, a very handsome man, also," and she smiled agreeably on Luigi.

The two friends burst into a peal of laughter, while the Abbé frowned at his serving-maid, who did not in the least understand the reproach. She nourished a secret tender feeling for M. Barbeau, and nothing was more honorable in

the world to her than to sing the praises of the Lord in His holy temple.

"And my friends pretend," continued the Marquis, "that I myself have a rather pretty tenor voice. Now, I propose, Monsieur le Curé, to sing at a mass for you to-morrow, and to sell reserved seats for ten louis a seat; that will make six thousand francs, and you need only five, thus leaving one thousand for the poor of the parish."

"Ten louis a seat!" exclaimed master and maid in one breath.

"Certainly," said the young man, tranquilly. "They ought to pay more, but as five thousand francs are sufficient—"

"But do you think, Monsieur le Marquis, that even our rich neighbors of the châteaux will be willing to pay such a price?"

"I promise you five thousand francs!" gaily replied the young man, and then to Jeanne, "Give me writing materials."

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The good woman rushed out, pressing to her heart the tray which she still held in her hand. She soon returned with the wished for articles, which the marquis divided with his friends, and they both wrote at the Marquis' dictation some twenty letters as follows:

"Madame:—

"The Marquis of Candia and his friend Luigi will sing solemn high mass to-morrow in the parochial church of Ville-Jossy. Admittance to the church is of course free to all, but

the price of reserved seats is ten louis. The sum realized will be applied to the needs of the church and the relief of the poor. Please accept, etc."

The curé and Jeanne gave the addresses of the wealthy families of the neighborhood, and in an hour ten messengers carried them to their destinations.

The servant of the curé is a power in a village, and as Jeanne never abused her privileges and knew well how to use them on occasion, she could have had sixty messengers instead of ten if she had required them.

The two friends took an inventory of the chest and found among the books and papers, the archiepiscopal letters, and the priest's sermons, the scores of which I have spoken. I do not know what mass of Haydn's they chose, but they soon retired to their chamber to look it over together, leaving the Abbé torn by doubt and hope, and Jeanne a prey to indescribable excitement.

Sunday dawned with a cloudless sky and a radiant promise of a perfect day. Thirty easy chairs had been collected from the houses of the village notables, and were ranged between the chancel and the pews, which were left free to the use of all. A little table covered with a snowy napkin bore a silver plate destined to receive the contribution of the privileged ones. The altar was illuminated as for Pentecost, and adorned with flowers as for Easter Day.

The bells rang out a joyous summons at ten o'clock, and soon the carriages began to arrive. The news had spread, I know not how, as far as Tours, and breskas, landaus, phaetons and barouches succeeded at the door of the church to berlines, mail-wagons, and every kind of vehicle ever used in the country. Never before had Ville-Jossy seen so many beautiful women, so many equipages, so much silk, satin, lace, and velvet. The thirty easy chairs were occupied fully fifteen minutes before the priest advanced to the altar, and a succession of charming ladies, guided by their cavaliers through the crowd of worshippers filling the nave, deposited their offerings and then took the ordinary seats.

The good Abbé surveyed the scene through the half-opened door of the vestry, and was amazed at this eager and opulent throng.

And Jeanne, while devoutly telling her beads, often cast a furtive glance at the plate where the gold was piled in heaps, and between two *Ave Marias* she calculated how much it contained. She thought it could not be far from a million, but she was deceived, for the sum promised by the Marquis was only doubled.

When the curé, wearing the robe of fête-days, came out of the vestry and advanced to the altar, a sigh of satisfaction accompanied by a last gentle rustle of silk ran over the assembly, then a profound silence fell over all.

After the first prayer of the priest at the steps of the altar the organ played the prelude, then a voice of extraordinary register, pure as that of a seraphim, so supple, sympathetic and sweet that it seemed impossible for it to be a human voice, intoned the Kyrie. At the Gloria a basso, unrivalled even to the present day, joined in the chant of the tenor and held the listeners under a charm long after the tones of the organ were extinguished in a harmonious sigh. The Preface was chanted by the officiating priest, the curé, who was not the least moved of the assembly; he was profoundly troubled; it was a day of great events, and he was yet subjugated by the charm of those marvelous voices, and in a state of mind partaking of stupor, of ravishment and ecstasy. He had never known that human voices could roll forth in such floods of harmony, or fall in such a shower of pearls. Then came the solemn moment of the *Elevation*, and the *Salutaris* of an inexpressible sweetness floated out on the air, every note of which reflected the emotion which stirred in each listening soul.

The *Agnus Dei*, that agonized cry of the Christian soul, was at first a remorseful, heart-rending plaint of supreme sadness, then it was gently, slowly transformed into a tender invocation, like a prayer ascending from the depths of an abyss, but borne to the feet of the Most High on wings of incense and harmony.

At the close of the service the singers were surrounded by the elegant people whom the Marquis had assembled and who deemed it an honor to press the hands of the two artists. At the head of these ladies, and the envied of all, was the Baronne de Blangis, claiming her guests, who announced their readiness to accompany her as soon as they had taken leave of the old priest.

When they entered the vestry, the curé was removing his sacerdotal garments, which Jeanne carefully folded and laid away.

"Well, Monsieur le Curé," said the Marquis, joyfully, "what do you think of my idea now?"

"And how about the receipts, eh, Mademoiselle Jeanne?" said Luigi, who evinced a particular interest in the buxom woman.

"Yes, my benefactors," replied the Abbé with much emotion, extending his hands to them, "yes, the idea was good and generous, and the receipts far exceed your promises, but the money belongs to you."

"Ah, Monsieur le Curé, you will make us angry," cried the Marquis, almost offended; "the money is neither for us nor for you; it belongs to the church and the poor, and you would have no right to refuse it."

"So let it be! I accept it for them, but at least I must know whom to pray for and what names my poor ones ought to bless."

The two friends looked at each other and hesitated a moment, then the Marquis, replying to an inquiring look of Luigi, said, "Why not?"

"Why not?" replied Luigi, and, turning to the Abbé, said: "My friend is Giuseppe Mario, and I am Luigi Lablache, both of the opera, as perhaps you know."

"Lablache and Mario," said the priest, "are two names all the world knows, but all the world does not know as I do the goodness of your hearts. May God bless you."

And the hands of the old man were raised in benediction over the reverently bowed heads of the two artists.

THE DEVIL AND TOM WALKER

BY WASHINGTON IRVING

Famous Story Series

A few miles from Boston in Massachusetts there is a deep inlet, winding several miles into the interior of the country from Charles Bay, and terminating in a thickly wooded swamp or morass.

On one side of this inlet is a beautiful dark grove; on the opposite side the land rises abruptly from the water's edge into a high ridge, on which grow a few scattered oaks of great age and immense size.

Under one of these gigantic trees, according to old stories, there was a great treasure buried by Kidd the pirate.

The inlet allowed a facility to bring the money in a boat secretly and at night to the very foot of the hill; the elevation of the place permitted a good lookout to be kept that no one was at hand; while the remarkable trees formed good landmarks by which the place might easily be found again.

The old stories add, moreover, that the devil presided at the hiding of the money, and took it under his guardianship; but this, it is well known, he always does with buried treasure, particularly when it has been ill-gotten. Be that as it may, Kidd never returned to recover his wealth; being shortly after seized at Boston, sent out to England, and there hanged for a pirate.

About the year 1727, just at the time that earthquakes were prevalent in New England, and shook many tall sinners down upon their knees, there lived near this place a meagre, miserly fellow, of the name of Tom Walker. He had a wife as miserly as himself; they were so miserly that they even conspired to cheat each other. Whatever the woman could lay hands on, she hid away; a hen could not cackle but she was on the alert to secure the new-laid egg. Her husband was continually prying about to detect her secret hoards, and many and fierce were the conflicts that took place about what ought to have been common property.

They lived in a forlorn-looking house that stood alone, and

had an air of starvation. A few straggling savin-trees, emblems of sterility, grew near it; no smoke ever curled from its chimney; no traveller stopped at its door. A miserable horse, whose ribs were as articulate as the bars of a gridiron, stalked about a field, where a thin carpet of moss, scarcely covering the ragged beds of pudding-stone, tantalized and balked his hunger; and sometimes he would lean his head over the fence, look piteously at the passer-by, and seem to petition deliverance from this land of famine.

The house and its inmates had altogether a bad name. Tom's wife was a tall termagant, fierce of temper, loud of tongue, and strong of arm. Her voice was often heard in wordy warfare with her husband; and his face sometimes showed signs that their conflicts were not confined to words. No one ventured, however, to interfere between them. The lonely wayfarer shrunk within himself at the horrid clamor and clapper-clawing; eyed the den of discord askance; and hurried on his way, rejoicing, if a bachelor, in his celibacy.

One day that Tom Walker had been to a distant part of the neighborhood, he took what he considered a short cut homeward, through the swamp. Like most short cuts, it was an ill-chosen route. The swamp was thickly grown with great gloomy pines and hemlocks, some of them ninety feet high, which made it dark at noonday, and a retreat for all the owls of the neighborhood. It was full of pits and quagmires, partly covered with weeds and mosses, where the green surface often betrayed the traveller into a gulf of black, smothering mud; there were also dark and stagnant pools, the abodes of the tadpole, the bull-frog, and the water-snake; where the trunks of pines and hemlocks lay half-drowned, half-rotting, looking like alligators sleeping in the mire.

Tom had long been picking his way cautiously through this treacherous forest; stepping from tuft to tuft of rushes and roots, which afforded precarious footholds among deep sloughs; or pacing carefully, like a cat, along the prostrate trunks of trees; startled now and then by the sudden screaming of the bittern, or the quacking of a wild duck rising on the wing from some solitary pool. At length he arrived at a firm piece of ground, which ran out like a peninsula into the deep bosom of the swamp.

It had been one of the strongholds of the Indians during their wars with the first colonists. Here they had thrown up a kind of fort, which they had looked upon as almost impregnable, and had used as a place of refuge for their squaws and children. Nothing remained of the old Indian fort but a few embankments, gradually sinking to the level of the surrounding earth, and already overgrown in part by oaks and other forest trees, the foliage of which formed a contrast to the dark pines and hemlocks of the swamp.

It was late in the dusk of evening when Tom Walker reached the old fort, and he paused there awhile to rest himself. Any one but he would have felt unwilling to linger in this lonely, melancholy place, for the common people had a bad opinion of it, from the stories handed down from the time of the Indian wars, when it was asserted that the savages held incantations here, and made sacrifices to the evil spirit.

Tom Walker, however, was not a man to be troubled with any fears of the kind. He reposed himself for some time on the trunk of a fallen hemlock, listening to the boding cry of the tree-toad, and delving with his walking-staff into a mound of black mould at his feet.

Unconsciously turning up the soil, his staff struck against something hard. He raked it out of the vegetable mould, and lo! a cloven skull, with an Indian tomahawk buried deep in it lay before him. The rust on the weapon showed the time that had elapsed since this death-blow had been given. It was a dreary memento of the fierce struggle that had taken place in this last foothold of the Indian warriors.

"Humph!" said Tom Walker, as he gave it a kick to shake the dirt from it.

"Let that skull alone!" said a gruff voice.

Tom lifted up his eyes, and beheld a great black man seated directly opposite him, on the stump of a tree. He was exceedingly surprised, having neither heard nor seen anyone approach; and he was still more perplexed on observing, as well as the gathering gloom would permit, that the stranger was neither negro nor Indian. It is true he was dressed in a rude half Indian garb, and had a red belt or sash swathed round his body; but his face was neither black nor copper-colored, but swarthy and dingy, and begrimed with

soot, as if he had been accustomed to toil among fires and forges. He had a shock of coarse black hair, that stood out from his head in all directions, and bore an axe on his shoulder.

He scowled for a moment at Tom with a pair of great red eyes.

"What are you doing on my grounds?" said the black man, with a hoarse growling voice.

"Your grounds!" said Tom, with a sneer, "no more your grounds than mine; they belong to Deacon Peabody."

"Deacon Peabody be d——d," said the stranger, "as I flatter myself he will be, if he does not look more to his own sins and less to those of his neighbors. Look yonder, and see how Deacon Peabody is faring."

Tom looked in the direction that the stranger pointed, and beheld one of the great trees, fair and flourishing without, but rotten at the core, and saw that it had been nearly hewn through, so that the first high wind was likely to blow it down. On the bark of the tree was scored the name of Deacon Peabody, an eminent man, who had waxed wealthy by driving shrewd bargains with the Indians.

He now looked around, and found most of the tall trees marked with the name of some great man of the colony, and all more or less scored by the axe. The one on which he had been seated, and which had evidently just been hewn down, bore the name of Crowninshield; and he recollected a mighty rich man of that name, who had made a vulgar display of wealth, which it was whispered he had acquired by buccaneering.

"He's just ready for burning!" said the black man, with a growl of triumph. "You see I am likely to have a good stock of firewood for winter."

"But what right have you," said Tom, "to cut down Deacon Peabody's timber?"

"The right of a prior claim," said the other. "This woodland belonged to me long before one of your white-faced race put foot upon the soil."

"And pray, who are you, if I may be so bold?" said Tom.

"Oh, I go by various names. I am the wild huntsman in some countries; the black miner in others. In this neighborhood I am known by the name of the black woodsman. I

am he to whom the red men consecrated this spot, and in honor of whom they now and then roasted a white man, by way of sweet-smelling sacrifice. Since the red men have been exterminated by you white savages, I amuse myself by presiding at the persecutions of Quakers and Anabaptists; I am the great patron and prompter of slave-dealers, and the grand master of the Salem witches."

"The upshot of all which is, that, if I mistake not," said Tom, sturdily, "you are commonly called Old Scratch."

"The same, at your service!" replied the black man, with a half-civil nod.

Such was the opening of this interview, according to the old story; though it has almost too familiar an air to be credited. One would think that to meet with such a singular personage, in this wild, lonely place, would have shaken any man's nerves; but Tom was a hard-minded fellow, not easily daunted, and he had lived so long with a termagant wife, that he did not even fear the devil.

It is said that after this commencement they had a long and earnest conversation together, as Tom returned homeward. The black man told him of great sums of money buried by Kidd the pirate, under the oak trees on the high ridge not far from the morass. All these were under his command, and protected by his power, so that none could find them but such as propitiated his favor. These he offered to place within Tom Walker's reach, having conceived an especial kindness for him; but they were to be had only on certain conditions.

What these conditions were may be easily surmised, though Tom never disclosed them publicly. They must have been very hard, for he required time to think of them, and he was not a man to stick at trifles when money was in view.

When they reached the edge of the swamp, the stranger paused.

"What proof have I that all you have been telling me is true?" said Tom.

"There's my signature," said the black man, pressing his finger on Tom's forehead. So saying he turned off among the thickets of the swamp, and seemed, as Tom said, to go down, down, down, into the earth, until nothing but his

head and shoulders could be seen, and so on, until he totally disappeared.

When Tom reached home he found the black print of a finger, burnt as it were, into his forehead, which nothing could obliterate.

The first news his wife had to tell him was the sudden death of Absalom Crowninshield, the rich buccaneer. It was announced in the papers with the usual flourish, that "A great man had fallen in Israel."

Tom recollected the tree which his black friend had just hewn down, and which was ready for burning. "Let the freebooter roast," said Tom, "who cares!" He now felt convinced that all he had heard and seen was no illusion.

He was not prone to let his wife into his confidence; but as this was an uneasy secret, he willingly shared it with her. All her avarice was awakened at the mention of hidden gold, and she urged her husband to comply with the black man's terms, and secure what would make them wealthy for life. However Tom might have felt disposed to sell himself to the devil, he was determined not to do so to oblige his wife; so he flatly refused, out of the mere spirit of contradiction. Many and bitter were the quarrels they had on the subject; but the more she talked, the more resolute was Tom not to be damned to please her.

At length she determined to drive the bargain on her own account, and if she succeeded, to keep all the gain to herself. Being of the same fearless temper as her husband, she set off for the old Indian fort toward the close of a summer's day. She was many hours absent. When she came back, she was reserved and sullen in her replies. She spoke something of a black man, whom she had met about twilight hewing at the root of a tall tree. He was sulky, however, and would not come to terms; she was to go again with a propitiatory offering, but what it was she forbore to say.

The next evening she set off again for the swamp, with her apron heavily laden. Tom waited and waited for her, but in vain; midnight came, but she did not make her appearance; morning, noon, night returned, but still she did not come. Tom now grew uneasy for her safety, especially as he found she had carried off in her apron the silver teapot and spoons, and every portable article of value. Another

night elapsed, another morning came; but no wife. In a word she was never heard of more.

What was her real fate nobody knows, in consequence of so many pretending to know. It is one of those facts which have become confounded by a variety of historians. Some asserted that she lost her way among the tangled mazes of the swamp, and sank into some pit or slough; others, more uncharitable, hinted that she had eloped with the household booty, and made off to some other province; while others surmised that the tempter had decoyed her into a dismal quagmire, on the top of which her hat was found lying. In confirmation of this, it was said a great black man, with an axe on his shoulder, was seen late that very evening coming out of the swamp, carrying a bundle tied in a check apron, with an air of surly triumph.

The most current and probable story, however, observes that Tom Walker grew so anxious about the fate of his wife and his property that he set out at length to seek them both at the Indian fort. During a long summer's afternoon he searched about the gloomy place, but no wife was to be seen. He called her name repeatedly, but she was nowhere to be heard. The bittern alone responded to his voice, as it flew screaming by; or the bull-frog croaked dolefully from a neighboring pool.

At length, it is said, just in the brown hour of twilight, when the owls began to hoot, and the bats to flit about, his attention was attracted by the clamor of carrion crows hovering about a cypress-tree. He looked up, and beheld a bundle tied in a check apron, hanging in the branches of the tree, with a great vulture perched hard by, as if keeping watch upon it. He leaped with joy, for he recognized his wife's apron, and supposed it to contain the household valuables.

"Let us get hold of the property," said he, consolingly to himself, "and we will endeavor to do without the woman."

As he scrambled up the tree, the vulture spread its wide wings, and sailed off screaming into the deep shadows of the forest. Tom seized the checked apron, but, woeful sight! found nothing but a heart and liver tied up in it.

Such, according to this most authentic old story, was all that was to be found of Tom's wife. She had probably at-

tempted to deal with the black man as she had been accustomed to deal with her husband; but, though a female scold is generally considered a match for the devil, yet in this instance she appears to have had the worst of it. She must have died game, however, for it is said Tom noticed many prints of cloven feet deeply stamped about the tree, and found handfuls of hair, that looked as if they had been plucked from the coarse black shock of the woodman. Tom knew his wife's prowess by experience. He shrugged his shoulders as he looked at the signs of a fierce clapper-clawing. "Egad," said he to himself, "Old Scratch must have had a tough time of it!"

Tom consoled himself for the loss of his property, with the loss of his wife, for he was a man of fortitude. He even felt something like gratitude toward the black woodman, who, he considered, had done him a kindness. He sought, therefore, to cultivate a further acquaintance with him, but for some time without success; the old black-legs played shy, for whatever people may think, he is not always to be had for calling for: he knows how to play his cards when pretty sure of his game.

At length, it is said, when delay had whetted Tom's eagerness to the quick, and prepared him to agree to anything rather than not gain the promised treasure, he met the black man one evening in his usual woodman's dress, with his axe on his shoulder, sauntering along the swamp, and humming a tune. He affected to receive Tom's advances with indifference, made brief replies and went on humming his tune.

By degrees, however, Tom brought him to business, and they began to haggle about the terms on which the former was to have the pirate's treasure. There was one condition which need not be mentioned, being generally understood in all cases where the devil grants favors; but there were others about which, though of less importance, he was inflexibly obstinate. He insisted that the money found through his means should be employed in his service. He proposed, therefore, that Tom should employ it in the black traffic; that is to say, that he should fit out a slave-ship. This, however, Tom resolutely refused: he was bad enough in all conscience; but the devil himself could not tempt him to turn slave-trader.

Finding Tom so squeamish on this point, he did not insist upon it, but proposed, instead, that he should turn usurer; the devil being extremely anxious for the increase of usurers, looking upon them as his peculiar people.

To this no objections were made, for it was just to Tom's taste.

"You shall open a broker's shop in Boston next month," said the black man.

"I'll do it to-morrow, if you wish," said Tom Walker.

"You shall lend money at two per cent a month."

"Egad, I'll charge four!" replied Tom Walker,

"You shall extort bonds, foreclose mortgages, drive the merchants to bankruptcy——"

"I'll drive them to the d——l," cried Tom Walker.

"You are the usurer for my money!" said black-legs with delight. "When will you want the rhino?"

"This very night."

"Done!" said the devil.

"Done!" said Tom Walker. So they shook hands and struck a bargain.

A few days' time saw Tom Walker seated behind his desk in a counting house in Boston.

Tom's reputation for a ready moneyed man, who would lend money out for a good consideration, soon spread abroad. Everybody remembers the time of Governor Belcher, when money was particularly scarce. It was a time of paper credit. The country had been deluged with government bills, the famous Land Bank had been established; there had been a rage for speculating; the people had run mad with schemes for new settlements; for building cities in the wilderness; land jobbers went about with maps of grants, and townships, and Eldorados, lying nobody knew where, but which everybody was ready to purchase. In a word, the great speculating fever which breaks out every now and then in the country, had raged to an alarming degree, and everybody was dreaming of making sudden fortunes from nothing. As usual the fever had subsided; the dream had gone off, and the imaginary fortunes with it; the patients were left in doleful plight, and the whole country resounded with the consequent cry of "hard times."

At this propitious time of public distress did Tom Walker set up as usurer in Boston. His door was soon thronged by customers. The needy and adventurous; the gambling speculator; the dreaming land jobber; the thriftless tradesman; the merchant with cracked credit; in short, every one driven to raise money by desperate means and desperate sacrifices, hurried to Tom Walker.

Thus Tom was the universal friend of the needy, and acted like a "friend in need"; that is to say, he always exacted good pay and good security. In proportion to the distress of the applicant was the hardness of his terms. He accumulated bonds and mortgages; gradually squeezed his customers closer and closer; and sent them at length, dry as a sponge, from his door.

In this way he made money hand over hand; he became a rich and mighty man, and exalted his cocked hat upon 'Change. He built himself, as usual, a vast house, out of ostentation; but left the greater part of it unfinished and unfurnished, out of parsimony. He even set up a carriage in the fulness of his vainglory, though he nearly starved the horses which drew it; and as the ungreased wheels groaned and screeched on the axle-trees, you would have thought you heard the souls of the poor debtors he was squeezing.

As Tom waxed old, however, he grew thoughtful. Having secured the good things of this world, he began to feel anxious about those of the next. He thought with regret on the bargain he had made with his black friend, and set his wits to work to cheat him out of the conditions. He became, therefore, all of a sudden, a violent church-goer. He prayed loudly and strenuously, as if heaven were to be taken by force of lungs. Indeed, one might always tell when he had sinned most during the week, by the clamor of his Sunday devotion. The quiet Christians who had been modestly and steadfastly traveling Zionward, were struck with self-reproach at seeing themselves so suddenly outstripped in their career by this new-made convert. Tom was as rigid in religion as in money matters; he was a stern supervisor and censorer of his neighbors, and seemed to think every sin entered up to their account became a credit on his own side of the page. He even talked of the expediency of reviving the persecution of Quakers and Anabaptists.

In a word, Tom's zeal became as notorious as his riches.

Still, in spite of all this strenuous attention to forms, Tom had a lurking dread that the devil, after all, would have his due. That he might not be taken unawares, therefore, it is said he always carried a small Bible in his coat pocket. He had also a great folio Bible on his counting-house desk, and would frequently be found reading it when people called on business; on such occasions he would lay his green spectacles in the book, to mark the place, while he turned round to drive some usurious bargain.

Some say that Tom grew a little crack-brained in his old days, and that, fancying his end approaching, he had his horse new-shod, saddled and bridled, and buried with his feet uppermost; because he supposed that at the last day the world would be turned upside down: in which case he should find his horse standing ready for mounting, and he was determined at the worst to give his old friend a run for it.

One hot summer afternoon in the dog-days, just as a terrible black thunder-gust was coming up, Tom sat in his counting-house, in his white linen cap and India silk morning-gown. He was on the point of foreclosing a mortgage, by which he would complete the ruin of an unlucky land-speculator for whom he professed the greatest friendship. The poor land-jobber begged him to grant a few months' indulgence. Tom had grown testy and irritated, and refused another day. "My family will be ruined, and brought upon the parish," said the land-jobber.

"Charity begins at home," replied Tom; "I must take care of myself in these hard times."

"You have made so much money out of me," said the speculator.

Tom lost his patience and his piety. "The devil take me," said he, "if I have made a farthing!"

Just then there were three loud knocks at the street door. He stepped out to see who was there. A black man was holding a black horse which neighed and stamped with impatience.

"Tom, you're come for," said the black fellow, gruffly.

Tom shrank back, but too late. He had left his little Bible at the bottom of his coat-pocket, and his big Bible on the desk buried under the mortgage he was about to foreclose: never was sinner taken more unawares.

The black man whisked him like a child into the saddle, gave the horse a lash, and away he galloped with Tom on his back, in the midst of the thunder-storm. The clerks stuck their pens behind their ears, and stared after him from the windows. Away went Tom Walker, dashing down the streets; his white cap bobbing up and down; his morning-gown fluttering in the wind, and his steed striking fire out of the pavement at every pound.

When the clerks turned to look for the black man, he had disappeared.

Tom Walker never returned to foreclose the mortgage. A countryman, who lived on the border of the swamp, reported that in the height of the thunder-gust he heard a great clattering of hoofs and a howling along the road, and running to the window caught sight of a figure, such as I have described, on a horse that galloped like mad across the fields, over hills and down into the black hemlock swamp toward the old Indian fort; and that shortly after, a thunder-bolt falling in that direction seemed to set the forest in a blaze.

The good people of Boston shook their heads and shrugged their shoulders, but had been so much accustomed to witches and goblins, and tricks of the devil, in all kinds of shapes, from the first settlement of the colony, that they were not so much horror-struck as might have been expected. Trustees were appointed to take charge of Tom's effects. There was nothing, however to administer upon. On searching his coffers, all his bonds and mortgages were found reduced to cinders. In place of gold and silver, his iron chest was filled with chips and shavings; two skeletons lay in his stable instead of his half-starved horses, and the very next day his great house took fire and was burnt to the ground.

Such was the end of Tom Walker and his ill-gotten wealth. Let all griping money-brokers lay this story to heart. The truth of it is not to be doubted. The very hole under the oak trees, whence he dug Kidd's money, is to be seen to this day; and the neighboring swamp and the old Indian fort are often haunted in stormy nights by a figure on horseback, in morning-gown and white cap, which is doubtless the troubled spirit of the usurer. In fact, the story has resolved itself into a proverb, and is the origin of that popular saying, so prevalent throughout New England, of "The Devil and Tom Walker."

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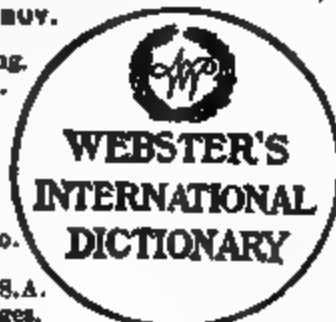
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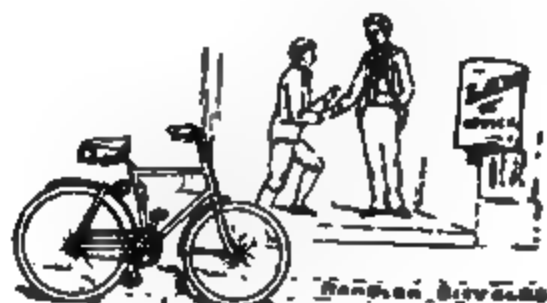
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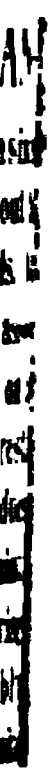
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